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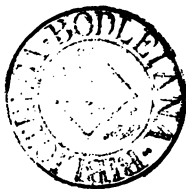


THIRTEEN SERMONS

FROM THE

ARESIMALE OF QUIRICO ROSSI.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN.



EDITED BY

JOHN M. ASHLEY, B.C.L.

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P R E F A C E.

It is not so much on account of their theological and doctrinal excellence that these sermons have been selected for translation, but rather for their charming simplicity of thought and expression, a simplicity that conveys the very highest truths in a manner that appeals to the least cultivated intellect. For many years Rossi was a most diligent student of Holy Scripture, and a public commentator upon the sacred text, hence we note in his sermons many striking allusions, not to the narratives alone, but also to the very words of the Old Testament writings. Hardly a lesson but what is enforced by a reference to those things which were written for our instruction: a spiritual application being made—as the HOLY GHOST intended that it should be—of the bare events of the inspired history. Sentences, sayings, and maxims from the Fathers too, will be found so interwoven with the scriptural quotations, that the sense of the one seems almost to supplement that of the other.

There is not a single sermon which does not contain either some new reading of a passage of Holy Scripture, or some valuable saying of one of the accredited Fathers of the Church.

As a mere "companion to the Bible," the following sermons will be of no slight value : since the spirit of Scripture has been most happily caught by our author, who is at the same time so careful a student of its letter. Quirico Rossi was a poet too, as well as a commentator and a preacher ; he viewed all things with the poet's eye ; there is a latent undercurrent of poetry in his every page ; if his imagination does not take a very high poetic range, still its power is well sustained and its proportions harmoniously blended. The sermon on Paradise (xiii. p. 236) is one long strain of poetry, though expressed in prose. He aims far lower than the eloquent Segneri : but he has this great advantage over that mighty orator, viz., that he does not resort to Pagan writers for the illustration of his subject ; there is no mingling of things human with those that are divine in his writings.

But in truth no just comparison can be drawn between Segneri and Rossi : their minds, styles, and methods of illustration being so utterly unlike. The cold and vigorous flights of imagination of the former are represented by the gentle, persuasive, earnest pleadings, of the latter. So elegantly and gently does he plead, that whilst reading him, one seems to be almost transported to the green pastures beside the still waters, where the mind can alike learn and rest. In the days of Pagan revival in which Rossi lived, it must have cost him somewhat of a struggle to have freed himself so entirely from the trammels of the popular taste, well read as he was in the heathen authors. Ever and anon one is reminded of some passage or expression in the Greek poets, yet their words are never quoted, it is the thought only which passes into the text. It is in such a passage as this, that the poet seems to be

speaking : " GOD has given to some hardiness, to others wit; to some quickness of apprehension, to others industry." (Serm. viii. p. 156.) Anacreon's second ode, *φύσις κέρατα ταύροις*, must have suggested the line of thought.

Of far more value than the mind of the poet is the Christian heart of the man, which ever and anon breaks through the subject in hand, and gives us a glimpse of its deep and real feeling. It so records its personal experience of His service. " The good treatment which I have received from Him since I chose Him for my Master—nay rather, since He deigned to elect me to be His servant, the *law of gratitude* compels me to proclaim, and to testify to the sweetness of His nature," (p. 201.) It expresses its confidence at the hour of death. " To the friends of GOD, death itself is a repose, or to speak more truly, is a triumph, whence not only a just man, but GOD Himself comes to glorify us," (p. 182.) It has realised in no small degree the law of our SAVIOUR's love, else it could not have represented Him as saying, " If it were necessary for Me to plough again that vast sea of trouble on which I journeyed and was shipwrecked, I would cast Myself willingly into the sea again for the sake of your love," (p. 95.) If the mind of the poet says that, " every light disappears where passion encumbers the soul with its darkness," (p. 77,) the soul that is sustained by prayer makes itself heard in the following utterance : " If you have to gain heaven, prayer is the way. It was for this cause that CHRIST, having to choose the place whence He should return victorious to the eternal kingdom, chose neither Bethlehem, where He was born ; nor Tabor, where He was transfigured ; nor the

most holy Calvary, where He finished the great work laid upon Him by the FATHER, but He chose Olivet; yes, my beloved, Olivet, the ordinary faithful recipient of His long prayers, as if He wished to signify by this, that prayer is the road by which we must ascend to reign with God," (p. 225.)

The simile, of a child making figures with the end of a piece of lighted wood, is a very key to Rossi's mind, and it shows his exalted yet childlike simplicity of thought, for though the illustration is a very familiar one, yet we agree with him, that "the similitude is as divine as the application is clear," (p. 69.)

The *mystical and moral interpretation* of Holy Scripture which is sanctioned by our Blessed LORD's own practice and that of His Apostles, is well represented in the Sermons of Rossi. The water from our LORD's wounded side is that "river which went out of Eden to water the garden," (p. 239.) Of CHRIST, as set forth in 1 Cor. xii. 4—11, we read, He is constancy in Abraham; He is providence in Joseph; He is gentleness in David; He is wisdom in Solomon; He is strength in Samson; He is formidable omnipotence in Moses, "dividing to every man severally as He will," (p. 243.) The bunch of ripe grapes of the eternal Eshcol was prefigured "in that divine cluster of ripe grapes, elect, hanging from that stem, as JESUS was called by S. Paul; the grape of Cyprus suspended upon the pole of the Cross," (p. 254,) an old Patristic rendering. "The Sign of the Son of Man" is the Cross, (p. 84.) The Israelites demanding a King, are a type of men who leave GOD to be ruled over by their own passions, (p. 203—5.) The service of sin is represented by the wages of Nebuchadnezzar's army, (p. 214.) The Man of GOD de-

nouncing Jeroboam's sacrifice at Bethel, is a type of the Church, who "dashes in amongst the greater crowd, interrupts the insane feasts, and still cries, Altar! Altar!" (p. 8.) The tower of Babel is identified with the tower of heretics, (p. 23;) the Church with the Ark of Noah, (p. 31;) and the resistance of the Church to the world, nobly expressed by the text, "The waters multiplied and bore up the Ark." "I never read without great wonder," says Rossi, the Israelites' anxiety to "go up at once" into Canaan, despite the report of the spies. This was because he saw in it a type of a soul voluntarily going up to temptation, (p. 72.) The army which was sent against Elisha, smitten with blindness, and then brought into Samaria, represents sinners beguiled by sin, having their eyes opened to see the spiritual foes that are all around them, (p. 190.) The very change of mud into flesh affords an opportunity of contrasting creation with regeneration, (p. 100.) Isaiah's fine account of idol-making is turned to good profit: of our frail mortality part is converted into the idol of the world, which is indeed as "the remains of a tree given to the fire, and in fact consumed already and reduced to ashes," (p. 15.) A poetical description is given of Job's temptation in Sermon vi. "GOD was sitting on His starry throne," (p. 101.) The fall of Jerusalem is a similitude of the fall of a soul into the hands of the enemies of GOD, (p. 121.) As an application of a high truth of theology, we instance the following remark: "In that manner that the Hypostatic Union will give for ever to the Soul of JESUS CHRIST a true and inexplicable right of having there GOD as an indweller; so the sanctifying grace will be ever in you a true and inexplicable right of having for a guest the same GOD,"

(p. 105.) Again, "God's adoption is intrinsic and interior, by the power of which, the soul is born again and lives a new life," (p. 108.) Nothing can exceed the Evangelical fulness of these two statements of doctrine.

The *quotations from the Fathers* are at times very happy. S. Bernard's saying, that "God" in heaven "will be to the intellect as immense stores of light; to the will, an inexhaustible fountain of peace; to the memory, a continued assurance of eternity;" forms the groundwork of the Sermon on Paradise. But Rossi prefers the practical force of SS. Chrysostom, Augustine, and Jerome, to the more soft and tender aspirations of the Monk of Clairvaux. From S. Chrysostom we read that "God has two tables, earth and sea," (p. 141.) There would be "no cause for sorrow if we could understand every disposition of Providence." (p. 151.) That in prayer, "place is not to be sought for, but attention;" that "he furnishes weapons against himself, who does not weary out the enemy by the constancy of his prayers," (p. 220—2.) S. Augustine's sayings are numerous—"The need of one sick, the physician knows better than one who is sick," (p. 234.) Of the joy of all the comprehending spirits of heaven: "our superiors will be there to see it; our inferiors will be there for the purpose of being put in subjection to it; our equals will be there to feast with us," (p. 246.) "The last day is unknown that every day may be observed," (p. 14.) "As long as each one of us expects to be converted, so long is it, that the measure of our sins will not have been consummated," (p. 139.) S. Zeno is quoted as saying, "lust hath no place where death is feared," (p. 13.) Rossi applies to the soul, Tertullian's statement that, "Nature hath cast over every evil either fear or shame," (p. 122.) S. Basil writes of Abel, "He ordained that

the first death in the world should be innocent, so that the foundation might be weak upon which death was coming to found his kingdom," (p. 147.) S. Cyprian is quoted as exhorting his converts to be timid that they may become bold, (p. 74.) S. Jerome says that "God imposes commands, not because He has any need of our work; but only as a means whereby He can confer upon us His blessings and His riches," (p. 213.)

And now Rossi must be left to speak for himself in his English form, which, if at times uncouth and harsh, is sufficiently literal so as not to degenerate into a loose English paraphrase: a form of translation the most hateful as well as the most unfair. A translator does not pledge himself to accept the teaching of his author in every particular, and hence this is no garbled and imperfect version of the original. Let the reader change for himself "the carnival" into "the joy and revels of this world," the *punctilio* into a "vengeful and haughty spirit," &c. Quirico Rossi stands before us with all his merits and defects, and his English readers can use these Sermons, and alter them as they list. For the great use of Rossi will be as sermon helps to many who have well-nigh used up their accustomed modes of thought and expression, and who need some fresh thought, and another style somewhat out of the beaten track of their daily life. In these Sermons is presented some new and fallow ground to be broken up, and scarcely can any earnest-minded Priest fail to gain much material for a parochial instruction from our Author. Would that the loving, reverential spirit of Quirico Rossi might fall upon many of us, and that of his holy zeal, and deep knowledge, and child-like love, we may, in part at least, become partakers.

J. M. A.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE.

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QUIRICO ROSSI, the author of the following sermons, was born near Vicenza, A.D. 1696. He studied at the Jesuits' college at Bologna, and embraced the order A.D. 1731. After commenting publicly upon Holy Scripture for several years at Bologna, Modena, and Parma, he devoted himself entirely to preaching. In this latter capacity he gained such success, that he was invited to Parma to preach the *Carême* before the Infanta Donna Philippa and Madame de France. Clearness, elegance and brevity were his three aims in the composition of his sermons. He once said, "It is only from motives of politeness, that the hearer ever complains of the shortness of a sermon." It was from his labours as a poet, that he gained such nicety of expression as a preacher. Many poems from his work, "Saggio di Poesia Italiana," which was published in 1761, have been inserted in other collections of poetry. His volume of Court Sermons appeared four years afterwards.

Quirico Rossi died at Parma, on the 14th of March, A.D. 1760.

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SERMONS FROM THE QUARESIMALE OF QUIRICO ROSSI.

I.

MORTALITY AND ITS END.

"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."—*Gen.* iii. 19.

IF the hidden habit of the human heart can be rightly predicted from the outward deportment, and if in each one the indications of the countenance exactly correspond to the disposition of the mind, I ought to give, O hearers, a very festive and joyful beginning to the Apostolic exhortation of my preaching. I ought to congratulate myself on your behalf, that having now banished the dangerous amusement of the Carnival, you have anticipated for yourselves the healthful invitation which God gives to you by my mouth, even from the first day on which I have the honour to appear among you in the sacred character of His minister: "Turn ye even to Me with all your heart," (*Joel* ii. 12;) since wheresoever I cast my eyes around, I behold on every side, the signs of a sincere and profitable conversion. I see those theatres closed, which were a snare to the modesty of so many souls; I see those gaming-houses abandoned, which swal-

lowed up the possessions which belonged to the poor: I see lyres either dumb, or turned from profane songs, and attuned to grief. If I mark your faces, they are modestly attired, not with lying masks, but concealed in their paleness, and by their ashes. If I mark your tables, they are no longer spread for gluttony, but sanctified with frugality and with Christian temperance. I see the altars in mourning;—in mourning are the priests of the sanctuary vested, who, raising their hands and voices to heaven, supplicate for the Christian people pardon and peace: “Spare Thy people, O LORD.” (Joel ii. 17.) Feeling notwithstanding that God Himself bitterly laments in His prophets, that under a lacerated and mournful guise, men preserve a heart firm and obstinate in sin; I fear greatly that many, under the show of public repentance are hiding a conscience vitiated and defiled, “having (to adopt the formula of S. Paul) their conscience seared with a hot iron.” (1 Tim. iv. 2.) To these, at once, therefore, I direct my discourse; and these in the name of God I invite to contrition from their hearts: “Rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your GOD.” (Joel ii. 13.) That sacred and penitential dust which, O Christians, I see sprinkled upon your heads, if it is not in you a true indication, may become at least a stimulus to your consciences. And this is what Holy Church intends by the solemn ceremony of these ashes. Take good heed, for I reveal the mystery and the whole drift of my sermon. We are made of dust; and we shall come within a short time to be reduced to dust: “dust we are, and unto dust shall we return.” The thought of dust of which we are made ought to serve as a stimulus to a sincere conversion; the dust in which we shall be

reduced ought to serve as a stimulus to a constant conversion. To be brief, and more plain: our vileness and our tendency to fall, which the Church recalls to our memory, are two powerful motives—the first, to sincere conversion; the second, to constant conversion to the LORD. “Turn ye even to Me with all your heart.” “For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” Most Divine Spirit! Who descending in Sion upon the Apostles, didst enlighten their minds with eternal knowledge, inflame their hearts with ardent zeal, and dignify their tongues as marvellous organs, by which Thy voice might sound to the nations; deign, I pray Thee, to descend even on me, and to make me a faithful and true minister of the precious deposit by Thee committed to my conscience. I tremble, O my GOD, and I quake with fear, when Thou intimatest to me that I shall have to render an account, if any one of my hearers should chance to die hardened in sin: “The wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.” (Ezek. iii. 18.) And who am I, that I should be able to penetrate into the inward recesses of human hearts, to soften, to pierce, and to convert them? Alas! lend Thou to Thy unworthy servant, Thy voice of authority and power,—a voice which breaks the cedars of Libanus; which softens and crumbles the hardest rocks. Give me an eloquence like to that of the Apostles; a holy and a Christian eloquence; an eloquence which may not flatter the ears, but which may insinuate itself into the hearts, and impress them with the salutary counsels which I proclaim to them from day to day; so that my discourse may become, to Thee, a glory; to myself, a merit; and to my beloved hearers a help. Let us begin.

The father and doctor S. Augustine teaches, that as every sin takes its origin from pride, so conversion never came, neither ever can come, otherwise than from humility : “ We are not able to return to GOD except through humility, since we have fallen through pride.” So true is this, O Christian, that in the divine language of Scripture, humiliation of spirit and penitence, signify one and the same thing. Wherefore the holy lady Judith wishing to exhort the citizens of Bethulia to penitent contrition for their sins, said to them, that above all things they must deeply humble themselves before GOD : “ Let us humble our souls before Him.” (Judith viii. 16, Vulg.) But what means are stronger to enable us to conceive of a true sense of humiliation than to fix our look attentively upon that clay of which we are made ? “ Dust thou art.” Boast nevertheless, if you will, of your ancientness of descent, of your splendour of parentage, of your greatness in enterprises, of your abundance of riches ; to what do you lay claim ? (here resumes the Ecclesiastic) to what do you pretend ? To confound me with the sound of these names, to dazzle me with the lustre of these titles ? Although our lots in this world may be varied ; our states varied ; our conditions varied ; nevertheless we are all a vile mass of dust with which is mingled these divine gifts : “ As when one sifteth with a sieve, the dust will remain ; so will the perplexity of a man in his thoughts.” (Ecclus. xxvii. 5, Vulg.) As the finest flour and the purest meal comes out from the sieve when it is shaken, whilst that only remains which is worthless and useless ; so, says GOD, will it be with man, if he turns over his thoughts dispassionately with himself ; he will see that nothing remains with him, except that which is a token of confusion : “ as

when one sifteth with a sieve, the dust will remain ;” only dust, O noble one ! of so many titles, on account of which you are bearing yourself so noble and so proud : only dust, O rich one ! of so many possessions, with which you kindle the envy of the citizens : only dust, O learned one ! of so many sciences, through which your name is so exalted : only dust, O woman of pleasure ! of so many attractions, by which you draw after you a train of weak and idle minds : “ as when one sifteth with a sieve the dust will remain.” This, then, is all that will remain to you, if you are willing to sift yourselves, and to separate justly, that which is your own, from that which is a gift ; a loan, rather, from that Eternal Artificer Who formed you : “ As when one sifteth with a sieve, the dust will remain.”

Now it is exactly, I resume, in this state of shame and of humiliation to which the consideration of our most vile and worthless nature reduces us, that the sinner is disposed to conceive thoughts of conversion ;—thoughts which, in any other state, he is not able to dwell upon ;—for as long as he is so greatly charmed and fascinated with his dignities—as long as he considers only the vigour of his strength, the elevation of his rank, the wealth of his revenues, or any of those other things, whatsoever they may be, which are not properly his own, but are the mere ornaments of his clay ; how is it possible that he can learn the greatness either of the sins committed by him, or of those, moreover, which he is committing day by day ? His mind being full of, and darkened with, a thousand errors, he believes that every pleasure, every honour, and perfect liberty, are not only lawful for him, but his due ; every pleasure if he is young ; every honour

if he is noble ; entire freedom from restraint, if he is distinguished above others. He deems that his disposition, his will, and his passion ought to have the entire control over his actions ; and like that vain and cruel king of whom Ezekiel spoke, so can it be said of him with truth, that the smoke of his vanity has quenched in him all the light of the understanding : “Thine heart was lifted up, because of thy beauty ; thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness.” (Ezek. xxviii. 17.) Therefore, neither knowing himself nor his sin, he lacks the contrite state of the first disposition (as it was called by the Fathers of Trent,) which is necessarily required for the justification of a perverted soul. (C. Trid. VI. 16.) But as soon as he is recovered from that delirium which vainly feeds him with false ideas, he begins to meditate upon, and to remember his origin : “Dust thou art.” Little by little, he regains intelligence, and comprehends the deep abyss, into which the fatal forgetfulness of his condition and of his native dust had cast him. He knows how unjust he was, when in order to maintain the *punctilio*, he armed himself with vengeance and hatred against his neighbour : for he sees that *clay* has no reason to be angry even if it be disregarded, trampled under foot, and held in scorn. He knows now how wicked he was, when to procure himself a pleasure, he laid artifices and snares to entrap the innocence of others ; for he sees the ignobleness of that body, for the sake of which he made the sacrifice of an immortal and holy soul. He knows how unthankful he was, when in order to gratify his will, he outraged that God Who deigned to stamp the image of His glorious countenance upon matter so mean. He knows how rash he was,

when he dared to wage war, and to bear himself erect and haughty against the Omnipotent: "If against me," (then says he in another sense, and in one more true, than holy Job said of himself,) "if my dust (*terra*) cry against me." (Job xxxi. 38.) Yes, hearers! the dust of which we are made, however little we may wish to think about it, and to listen to it, cries against us, and reproves the boldness which led us to revile that great God Who as He revived it by a breath, is in like manner able to disperse and scatter it: "our dust cries against us."

To awaken, nevertheless, in her children that humiliation which disposes to conversion, Holy Church adopts the same means as the prophet Adonijah adopted, to lead back the apostate Jeroboam to the right way of salvation and truth. The latter was prostrating himself before the golden calf which he had just raised in the grand market-place of Bethel. He was adorned with the regal insignia, and he was holding in his hand the censer from which he was perfuming with Arabian perfumes the senseless image of the Egyptian calf. The victims by thousands struggling upon the altar, filled the contaminated air with a dense and sacrilegious mist. Then, confused with the smoke of the holocaust, the shouts of the adoring people ascended to heaven, who cried with drunken and idolatrous joy, "Behold thy gods, O Israel"—gods made at thy pleasure, and from whose yoke thou canst free thyself at will: "Behold thy gods, O Israel; behold thy gods," (1 Kings xii. 28.) Into that place where the people were most crowded, the minister of the living God rushed, and glowing with prophetic ardour, with his eyes flashing, he separated the assembled mass, overthrew the sacri-

fice, and in a most terrible authoritative voice cried, "Altar, altar." This prophetic voice was like a gust of wind, which lifting the hot ashes from the altar, scattered them upon the diadem of the prince, and upon the heads of the bystanders. The mad rejoicing ceased; the profane fires were instantly extinguished by the cloud of ashes; the songs and the festivities were hushed; and the revelers trembled with fear. "He cried . . . in the word of the LORD, O altar, altar . . . and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of GOD had given," (1 Kings xiii. 2, 5.) Baptized people! what less art thou in truth, in the days of carnival, than a people forgetful of GOD, and worshippers of joy and pleasure? A people given over to the dance, to the pleasures of the table, to midnight revels, to vain loves, and to excesses. Only call to mind, remember only the past night, which alone will be sufficient to convince thee of thy follies and of thy wild day-dreams. To dissolve a charm so strange and so fatal, the Church dashes in amongst a greater crowd, she interrupts the insane feasts, and still cries, "Altar, altar, altar; your ashes are scattered upon the head of every man; be they rich or poor; be they learned or unlearned; be they citizens or ploughmen; be they vassals or lords; the ashes poured out from the altar." And you, O ministers and guardians of the sanctuary, cry ye to all impartially, that they are dust, essentially dust; weak dust; unprofitable dust; wretched dust: "Cry ye . . . in the word of the LORD," "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Nevertheless, what is one to believe? Among so large a number of sinners, who are listening this morning to be reminded of their lowliness, who are departing from

the sacred altars with the bowed head, and with the forehead humbled beneath the ashes; how many do we not see of them, dearly beloved, who entering into self-communion, and fixing their minds upon their state, are saying with a sorrowful and contrite heart, "We have sinned before the LORD our GOD," and although formed of impure earth, refuse obedience to the Artificer Who formed us: "We have sinned before the LORD our GOD . . . and we were not obedient to Him," (Baruch i. 17, 18.) Alas! that so many, with the outward sign of their extreme humility and of their nothingness, should preserve at the same time their accustomed pride of heart, pretending to rival God; so that (to make use of the expression of S. Paul) "they are exalted above all that is called God." (2 Thess. ii. 4.) My most compassionate Redeemer, renew this morning in my hearers, the miracle which Thou once wroughtest upon the blind man of Jerusalem; "Anoint their eyes with the clay;" (S. John ix. 6;) place the dust upon their eyes; by the dust dispel their darkness, and by it heal the deplorable benightedness of their souls; "Fill their faces with shame," reproaching them for their sordid condition, and for the vileness of that impurity from which they spring; constraining them to renounce those ideas of themselves which they so vainly nourish, that they may be confounded before Thee and be converted: "fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Thy name, O LORD." (Ps. lxxxiii. 17.)

Nevertheless, O sinners, it is certainly true, that it will avail you little, to truly turn to God this morning, if your conversion should turn out to be unstable and fleeting. Holy Church desires for her children a firm and

lasting amendment of life. Therefore it is, that having called to remembrance the dust from which you trace your origin, as an effectual motive for sincere repentance—"dust thou art!"—the Church proceeds immediately to remind you, of the dust into which you will be resolved, as an effectual motive to continual repentance, "and to dust shalt thou return." This is indeed, dearly beloved, what I proposed to show you in the second place, and this is verily the marvellous antidote which David applied to himself, to preserve himself from those sins, which he had already washed away by his tears: "I have eaten ashes like bread." (Ps. cii. 9.) In the same way, says Hugo de S. Victor, (explaining this text in a moral sense) in the same way, that to sustain our bodily life we are wont every day to take food; so, that penitent king, to preserve his spiritual life, was wont to meditate every day upon the ashes of his tomb, and by such meditation to sustain it, as with substantial bread; "I have eaten ashes like bread."

And in truth, O hearers, what does a Christian do, who thinks often, and with attention, of his proneness to fall? He comes raising against the enemies of our souls, against the devil, and against the world, those most subtle weapons with which all these are wont to fight and subdue us. I know that the devil no longer dares to assail us with that lie, "Ye shall not surely die," (Gen. iii. 4,) with which he succeeded in the beginning, to triumph over, and to subdue our ruthless and unwary progenitors. He sees that that lie would no longer find faith with us, since to belie him, we could immediately point out horrible piles of sepulchral bones, and large fields of disintegrated dust. So it comes to pass, that this crafty one assails

us more subtilely in another way; he no longer promises us that we shall not die; but he promises us instead of this, a long life: "Thou hast much goods laid up for many years." (S. Luke xii. 19.) He shows, it is true, death, which he cannot hide, but he shows it to us, as a long way off; and as S. John saw it in Patmos, sitting upon a horse, both pale and lean, so that we might easily be led to believe, that death is not going to conduct us to our last resting-place, save after the travail of many lustrations. Our passions, seduced by such pleasing flatteries, grow excessive, so that they become most greedy and insatiable. Insatiable, the desire, of having the means of living sumptuously, in that long life which the devil promises us;—we only study to enlarge the estates, to increase the revenues, and to refill the coffers. "I will pull down my barns, and build bigger." Insatiable, the ambition, which, in order to appear with pomp for those many years which are hoped for in vain, there is no longer any restraint, from violating every right, from plotting against every rival, from preparing every device, in order to be exalted. "I will ascend, I will ascend into heaven and exalt my throne." (Isa. xiv. 13.)

Insatiable, the incontinence, which, giving to God the last years, which are seen in the distance and in obscurity, and dissipating the intermediate years, in debauches, in amusements, in frivolities, in vain love; "We may enjoy the good things which are, we may use that which is created." So vainly imagine those people who live forgetful of such unforeseen accidents, which in so many ways are able to reduce them to dust. But a man, who meditates as a Christian, (and I will say through what is told him

about those two most awful eternities, between which he now lives, doubtful of his fate,) a man, I say, who meditates as a Christian, upon his own mortality, is very far from believing such flatteries, or from allowing himself to be lost in such deceits. He thinks that the measure of the days to each one prescribed by GOD, is not the same for all, but that in each one, it is shorter than was hoped for. He sees cut off from hour to hour, the most cherished lives, wives clad in mourning, and the august joy turned into sadness. (Job iii. 13.) He enters with Job into the sepulchres, and there seeing death, which lays low in like manner the skeletons, of sucking children, of vigorous young men, of men in the prime of life, and of decrepit old men ; he has not the boldness to promise himself even one day's life, when he sees all, in subjection to the will of a tyrant so base, and so implacable. Nay, to speak more to the point, he sees all in subjection to the will of that LORD, Who with a reaping-hook in hand, as the prophet saw Him, comes gathering at His pleasure, not only the ripened fruit, but that also, which appears to us to be unripe and sour. (Amos viii. 1, Vulg.) Therefore considering himself like a victim, not destined only, but on the point of being sacrificed, however much he may be endowed and adorned, he accounts this adorning, as a victim would, if it had sense, the garlands and the flowers with which it is crowned. He now no longer contents himself with the solemn ceremony of this day ; but he privately renews it hour by hour, and reminding himself of his frailty : " Remember," (he cries in his inmost soul) "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." And when reduced to ashes, ended will be thy honours ; ended will be thy comforts ; ended will be thy amusements ;

and the remembrance of thy undertakings will be lost : "your remembrances are like unto ashes." (Job xiii. 12.) By this dust he represses his pride. By this dust he raises a barrier against his desires. By this dust he learns charity, patience, Christian moderation, temperance : "For," (as observes S. Zeno,) "lust hath no place where death is feared." (Orat. De Contin.)

But oh ! how many there are among Christians, who drive away from themselves such a thought, as one that is weary and melancholy. How many believe that lie, which the devil utters to them, "Having good things stored up for many years," and care nothing for the threat which the Redeemer holds out to them : "The Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not." (S. Luke xii. 40.) Hence it is, you see, that the repentances are so unstable, and the relapses on the contrary are so frequent. Hence it is, that the passions of men are so fierce, and reason so weak and so indulgent ; because each one disposes at his pleasure of those moments, "which the FATHER hath put in His own power." (Acts i. 7.)

This want of consideration of our proneness to fall (said the Psalmist) was in every age the source, the unfailing source of our sins ; "because there is no regard to their death," (Ps. lxxii., Vulg.,) or as S. Jerome reads it from the Hebrew, "because they have not thought upon their death, therefore are they shut up in their iniquity and impiety." This, yes this, is chiefly the cause of your great libertinism, O ! licentious young men : "because you have not thought upon your death." This is the cause of your scandalous gallantries, O ! vain women : "Because you have not thought upon your death."

This, is the cause of so many of your underhand dealings, O! sordid mercenary ones. "Because you have not thought upon your death." This, is the source of so many of your pretensions and loftinesses, O! punctilious spirits. "Because you have not thought upon your death." A thought, which you lose in the games, in the conversations, and in the endless succession of most idle pastimes. But oh, my beloved, awaken this thought this morning. "Unto dust thou shalt return." Second the intentions of GOD, who, according to the saying of the holy father, S. Augustine, on that account, holds hidden the last day, so that we may be every day disposed and ready to depart from this world. "The last day is unknown, that every day may be observed." Death, in such a manner, resumes the saint, which was generated in us by sin, will in us, destroy that sin, by which it was generated, and I shall be able to console myself with Isaiah, in having changed for a crown of eternal glory, the sad ashes with which my beloved hearers are now sprinkled: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, to give a crown for ashes." (Isa. lxi. 2, 3, Vulg.)

SECOND PART.

To maintain ourselves continually, in the penitence which we have undertaken, there is no way, O Christians, so efficacious as the continual remembrance of our mortality, "unto dust shalt thou return." Not only because in such a manner, as I have just shown, we disarm the devil of his false promises, but because we even despoil this

great world of its false appearances, which are the more able to pervert us. Come, said God to Isaiah, come, O My servant, for I wish to show you a sight which is more strange than thou hast ever seen or imagined. Behold that workman, who goes to the neighbouring wood, and there vigorously handling the hatchet, cuts down a lofty cedar and an ancient oak. Afterwards he draws the wood to his workshop, the larger portion he casts into the fire to burn, by which to dress his meat. And the remainder? The remnant he hews, he fashions, he carves, and thus he forms of it an image, which he both worships and fears, as his god. He burns incense before it, he honours it with sacrifice, and in an act of supplication, bends his head to the ground to adore it: "And taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest, . . . he burneth part thereof in the fire, and the residue thereof he maketh a god; he falleth down unto it and worshippeth it." (Isa. xlv. 14, 16.) He adores an insensible trunk, carved into an idol, without ever considering, that a great part of it is dissolved into ashes: "None considereth in his heart, . . . I have burned part of it in the fire." Ah! my revered and most beloved hearers; do you know or reflect, what may be that world which you fear so much, and whose hard laws you so often prefer to the will of God? that world I say, which shows itself to you in an aspect so flattering, and which holds nevertheless so great a sway over your souls? Do you know what it is? It is the remains of a tree given to the fire, and in fact consumed already, and reduced into ashes: "Part thereof is ashes," (ver. 20, Vulg.) Come, says S. Augustine, come with me to the tombs of those who are dead and gone: and see

with your own eyes if this be true: "approach the sepulchres of each one, and behold more carefully." (Serm. clxxxi. De temp.) This, was a man of illustrious blood in the world, rich in the world, ambitious in the world, of high rank in the world, feared, courted, applauded in the world. "Behold," behold him now. Has he anything which distinguishes him from men, the vilest in the world? Not anything. "He is ashes." This, was a young man fresh in age as you are; clear of complexion as you are; gentle in manner as you are; perfumed with scent as you are; and more moral than you are. "Behold!" behold him now. Has he any remains of his former vivacity? Not any. "He is ashes." This, was the idol of every heart, and the life of every assembly, she had an infinite self-complacency, in seeing herself the attraction of a thousand idle ones; for this reason she was decked out with every ornament, for this reason she affected every grace. "Behold," behold her now. Has she any vestige of that which was, her so renowned beauty? All is perished; "She is dust." All the people who were before us, all were as so many swelling branches of that trunk; and all are now reduced to ashes: "Part thereof is ashes." And of that miserable remnant which alone remains, do you now form for yourselves a lying idol? "And the residue thereof he maketh a god, he falleth down unto it and worshippeth it." Is this, that divinity which terrifies you? this, that flatters you? this, that which seduces you? this, which you dare to cite in justification and excuse for your lewd useless life; in this way is the world used, does the world desire it to be thus? But, immortal God! What ever is this world which is so adored? Behold it: "Part thereof is ashes." And

that part itself which remains, that part, which from you demands worship, obedience and esteem, afterwards within a short time will become dust; "into dust it will return."

And behold, without more examples, so that the diligent consideration of the words which holy Church repeats to us this morning, may be for each one of us an effectual incentive to conversion. She teaches us our sinfulness, "dust thou art:" and in this, showing us the weight of the offences which we were bold enough to commit towards GOD, she obliges us to a penitence which may be sincere; "Unto dust shalt thou return:" and with that, revealing the false promises of the devil, and the false appearances of the world; she stimulates us to a conversion which may be constant: Be ye turned unto the LORD, for "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Only we ought to fear, lest the LORD should be wrathful, so as to reject us from His face; as if we were really dust, "which the wind driveth from the face of the earth." (Ps. i. 4.) And certainly we merit it, since we have been so proud and bold against Him. But these ashes themselves, which are to us a motive for repentance, may they be for Thee, my GOD, a motive for Thy most abundant mercy. Remember, that Thou hast formed me of clay, and that Thou wilt come within a short time to turn me into dust: "Remember, I beseech Thee, that Thou hast made me as the clay: and Thou wilt bring me into dust again." (Job x. 9.) If this morning, I mournfully pray for pardon for my sins, with these ashes upon my head; I have a right to pray for it, and to obtain it. They are the punishment which Thou didst declare against sinful man: (Gen. iii. 19.) Behold, I bear that punish-

ment before Thee. Behold me here, covered ; behold me here, humiliated under the ashes : “ Here shall Thy proud waves be stayed.” (Job xxxviii. 1.) Restrain Thine anger ; at sight of these ashes, calm Thyself ; tranquilize Thyself. Certainly it will be greater glory for Thee in eternity to have saved, rather than to have broken a vessel of clay, so fragile as I.

II.

THE TRUTH OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH.

"I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel."—S. Matth. viii. 10.

OF the number of affections which govern the human heart, you can scarcely find one which has impelled men to more extraordinary resolutions than zeal for religion. It would be saying little, that many for this cause, abandoned their country, and have gone from place to place in a miserable condition; that many have for this cause, suffered the most dreadful torments and have scorned the most barbarous tortures; that many for this cause, breaking the strongest ties of nature and blood, have looked upon their beloved wives, husbands, fathers and their children, not only as strangers, but as enemies. Wars also the most implacable, by which provinces have been overturned, kingdoms overthrown, monarchies desolated, and the proudest diadems transferred from one brow to another, have been kindled, (alas too often) either from the wish to maintain, or from the desire to change the established religion. It is not to be wondered at therefore, if that same zeal for religion should impel me, O dearly beloved, to expend at least my strength, in homage to that faith for whose testimony and defence I should

esteem it a great honour to shed my blood. I know the celebrated saying of Tertullian, that after the noble triumphs of the Catholic Church, now victorious over error, victorious over malice, victorious over cruelty, there is no longer occasion to search out, which, among so many and such contrary religions may be the right, the saving, the true one. "Since the gospel, there is no need for us to search."

But I also know that he only meant to condemn the bold curiosity of the unbelieving who wish to examine the basis of this religion, for the guilty desire they have to repudiate it and to combat it. He did not mean to condemn the reverential examination of the faithful, who, from time to time, descend in thought to consider the stability of the foundation of their religion, in order to strengthen themselves the more in it, and ever to be more grateful to that GOD, who has gathered them within that strong fortress, against which, considering the power of Him who founded it, the black gates of hell shall never prevail. Nor on setting before you this morning the truth of that Church to which we belong, have I proposed to myself any other object, than that of awakening in your hearts that aforesaid spirit of gratitude; and at the same time that joy, which it must cause to the poor pilgrim, to be assured that if he suffers, he suffers at least in walking in the right way, which alone can conduct him to salvation.

Let us begin. According to the plain word of the apostle Paul, as there is but one GOD, "one LORD;" so there can be but one true religion, "one faith." Of the many religions which separate their followers through rivalry, and which all boast to be the offspring of GOD,

let us consider here seasonably, the lineaments of them, and let that faith be born of GOD, which we shall perceive to be like GOD Himself; like Him, in the wisdom which is discerned from the truth of the articles; like Him, in the holiness which is seen from the rectitude of the laws; like Him in the power, with which its advancement is immediately and marvellously manifested. And with regard to the truth of the articles, O hearers; inasmuch as the doctrine which is professed by the Church has been for many ages sifted, examined and discussed, and I will even say, dissected, not only by men of the most penetrating genius; as Basil, Ambrose, Athanasius, the three Gregories, Jerome, Cyprian, certainly were; and among the many others an Augustine, who before he would allow his proud and restive intellect to be subdued, meditated upon the smallest point and every jot and tittle of this doctrine; but even by enemies, who were eager to find in it, either inconsistency or fallacy, by which to calumniate it among men as being false. Nothing, however, has ever been found in it, opposed or contrary to, that light which nature has vividly kindled in us, and which by the first sin, became truly enfeebled, but not extinguished. If it speaks of GOD, it speaks of Him as of a Being in everything possessing that goodness, which He sheds abundantly throughout the whole world; as of a Being, eternal, immutable, independent, self-sufficient, and blessed in Himself; Whose excellence surpasses all things; Whose providence governs and Whose power subdues all things. If it speaks of man, it speaks of him, as being free to will what is good and also to follow after that which is evil: it speaks of him, as being endowed above all things with a soul immortal, and lasting through all ages; with a

capacity for blessedness, if by working honestly he renders himself worthy of it; subject to condemnation, if madly abusing his own will, so that he himself becomes the cause of his own misery.

It is true, O hearers, that beyond those decreed articles of belief, naturally known by those philosophers themselves who did not wish to follow in the crowd with Epicurus; our faith has mysteries impenetrable to the view of every creature, and under the weight of whose glory the bold scrutinizer remains oppressed. But the wise of this world who are truly fools, "exalting themselves against the knowledge of God," wishing to conquer GOD Himself by science, angrily blaspheme that which they do not know, and reduce religion to philosophy. May these see somewhat this morning, the madness of blind human intellect, when to punish the pride of it, GOD allowed it to go to its "proper place," following its foolish and ridiculous ravings. It has feigned multitudes of Gods more sordid and more unbridled than the beasts themselves. The masters of Greece and Rome, have been seen to bend their proud heads, to offer sacrifices and superstitious incense to an adulterous Jupiter, to a bloodthirsty Mars, to a jealous Juno, and to a meretricious Venus, and to a great number of others such as these disgusting divinities of their own imagining. Disgraced human knowledge! how dost thou dare after this to make thyself a judge and arbitrator of religion? How dost thou dare to call to thy bar, the supreme Providence, and to penetrate with thy look through the profound abyss of inaccessible divine light? If these great lovers of evidence and scorers of humble belief, have sense enough to be able to consider that the essential character of an

essentially divine faith, is the containing hidden mysteries which far transcend our ideas, rather than become turned aside with that madness, "Except I shall see I will not believe;" they also would confess that in the head of the Church is the sacred scripture, the true Catechism, the true Christianity, lastly the true nucleus of the divine faith.

Do not expect me to repeat the various heresies, O hearers, seeing that among them, there are schisms, oppositions, confusions, within which, as in the most intricate labyrinth, people become deceitfully bewildered, and return to themselves; they affirm, deny, and say, and then deny what they have said, until one sees verified in them the prediction of Job, "He maketh them to stagger like a drunken man." (Job xii. 25.) Alike drunk with wine and with ribaldry, they are themselves the destroyers of that high building, which they desired to erect towards the north, in order to make war against heaven.

Therefore that great God who destroyed in early times the immense tower of Shinar, not by launching forth from on high, lightnings and thunderbolts, but by confounding the tongues of its architects, "Come, . . . let us confound their tongue," (Gen. xi. 7 :) in like manner He spreads upon the tongues of the leaders in heresy, in like manner, I say, He spreads a spirit of confusion, of unclearness, of perturbation, that where all were at first "of one tongue," now, they are discordant or disunited: each one wishes to constitute himself a head, and according to his pleasure to found a new Church, or rather a perfect Babel, "Come, let us confound their tongue." "Let us confound" the Ubiquitarians, the Trinitarians, the Sacramentarians, the Presbyterians, the

Puritans, the Anabaptists : and “let us confound” them in such a way that they may seize each other with the teeth, and may devour one another ; and “let us confound” them in such a way, that they shall mutually treat each other as blasphemers, as heretics, and as people possessed with the devil ; and “let us confound” them in such a way, that “they may not understand one another’s speech ;” so that in the same family and under the same roof, the husband may follow one faith, and the wife may follow another ; the father may profess one religion, and the children may follow the contrary, and all may err and all may be confused. “Let us confound” them, with that confusion which has produced so many sects, which has excited so many people to rebellion, and which like a torch, has kindled such cruel wars ; so confound them, in order that princes may understand that there is no plague more fatal to public happiness than perfidious and restless religionists. And behold, for our comfort, is verified that which even in his time was said by S. Hilary of Poitiers, “All, and each sect of heretics, when they themselves overcome, in turn nevertheless overcome nothing for themselves ; hence the victory of the Church is the fruit of their triumph ;”—they demolish each other ; but they so place the victory in the hand of the Church. Beautiful and signal triumph of the Church, which by the truth of its doctrines satisfies every intellect ; and by its profundity, subdues it, humbles it. The Church makes all her members, wherever they may live, and however in other subjects they may reason differently, and however different may be their studies, and their acquirements in revealed things, to speak one language alone ; and so reverently submitting themselves

to the teaching of the Church they render an evident testimony, that that GOD dwells in them, who, according to the saying of S. Paul, "is not the author of contentious but of peace." A doubt may by chance arise in your mind, how it happens, that since our faith is so in conformity with what is right, and whilst that of the other sects is so contrary to sound sense, yet, notwithstanding this fact, so many people should live perfidiously rebellious to its light. But this even, O beloved, JESUS the head and venerable consummator of our faith, has predicted; "Light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, for (note the true ground of infidelity,) their deeds are evil." The wicked hate the Church, not because she loads their minds with the adorable burden of her mysteries; but only because she bridles their passions with the burdensome morality of her laws. And I will briefly refer to those golden, and honoured days, when to make manifest the holiness of the Church, it sufficed to point to the manners of her children;—when Pliny from his allotted province, was able to answer the Emperor Trajan, that after he had taken from rigid investigators, the most intimate and the most critical information, upon the conduct and upon the life of Christians, no crime was discovered in them; save an obstinacy, not to be conquered, even by torments, against sacrificing to any other but to their own GOD;—when the judges feared to bring the Christians to trial lest they should be obliged to make known their stainless integrity;—when the tyrants esteemed it a greater punishment to a Christian woman, to expose her to the allurements of a sensual youth, than to abandon her to the fangs of a fierce lion;—when the intrepid Tertullian could

boldly defy the magistrates to show him a Christian who was weak ; a Christian who was an adulterer ; a Christian who was avaricious ; a Christian who was revengeful ; and who was not even an example—a living breathing example—of every virtue. Ah traitorous age, what hast thou done with an inheritance so precious, defended by our forefathers with so much blood ? Where now from a great number of Christians, have fled edification, modesty, and chastity ? How is it that one sees in a Church once so pure and not having in herself “ spot or wrinkle,” licentiousness walking so proudly in our day ? I know that unbelievers from this take occasion to calumniate us, and that on beholding the children of the Church stained with every kind of vice, they say, that in early ages the true Church was ours, but that ever since, it has lain buried invisibly in the catacombs of martyrs, or within the hearts of the elect only, whom GOD deigned to collect through Luther into His new Patmos of Wittemberg. But the foolish do not perceive, that this their argument, if it avails anything, avails to decide against their sects. Because if the wickedness of manners denotes, as they wish to make out, the falsity of the Church, amongst themselves there never was any true Church ; since those who were the founders of it, were the most wretched race that ever lived, “ Evil children swelling with pride, raging with deceit, insidious for calumnies, turbulent with seditions.” Proud men, who denied every subjection to their natural princes ; seditious men, who stirred up the provinces to rapine and to blood ; excommunicated men, who broke every promise once made to GOD ; lascivious men, of whom the apostle S. Jude would say, (ver. 5,) that of incorporeal things, they make mock, and abuse,

and in corporeal things, they act as brute beasts. Is it possible to believe that these can be sent from GOD, to reform the true Church in the world? O virgins ravished from the sacred cloisters; O young men despoiled of their honour; the temples turned into houses of ill-fame; the bread itself of the Eucharist thrown to the dogs; robberies, sacrilege, incontinence, were these the characters of their mission? Were these the new Pauls chosen to carry the glory of the Divine name before the faces of princes to the nations of the earth? For these should the purity of virgins live again, and the constancy of martyrs, and the vigilance of bishops, and the gravity and the splendour of the priesthood? O things to make me in the same moment, rage in anger, and weep for pity! But to discourse calmly, if the truth of the Church should be inferred, not from the holiness of its followers, but from the holiness of its precepts, here is the difference which exists between us and them. We if we sin, we do that which the holy Church forbids and condemns. They when they sin, do that which their laws commend or at least permit. Some permit to their followers the community of wives; some the incontinence of the senses; others the usurpation of their neighbour's goods; others the giving vent to their vengeance. To the innovators, their new gospels permit all the most detestable wickednesses, inculcating almost as their first dogma, that there is no sin except disbelieving the faith of their caprice, which will draw down souls to the pain of eternal death; from whence it follows that they can with impunity, "commit blasphemies, parricides, contempt of GOD, and adulteries." But if any one of the Sectarians, does not live thus, if even amongst them there are (as I am willing to

grant that there may be some persons honest in deed, faithful in promises, just in contracts, merciful to the poor ; it is not because their sect requires it of them, but it is because their conscience exacts it ; which according to the beautiful word of Tertullian, “is naturally Christian :” since the Church’s law alone contains the real principles of true honesty, nay of the most admirable and most sublime perfection. The law of the Church alone is that sword, which, according to the saying of the apostle, penetrating into the marrow of the soul, divides her from herself by a continual mortification of her appetites : a law, which commands us not to affect a severe morality in external things merely, under which veil the most violent passions of the human heart are oftentimes covered ; but to renounce truly and internally our inclinations, our hatred, our self-love, pleasure, covetousness : a law which idolaters, heretics, libertines, following the light of carnal wisdom, and not knowing the strength that is so inspired by the grace of JESUS CHRIST, always considered to be impossible, “the law of Christians is the law of impossibilities.” But our glorious annals truly contain that, which will confute the scoffers ; so many there have been in every age and in every kingdom who were the most exact observers of this law. For that LORD, Who communicated to His Church His wisdom, for the framing of her articles of faith ; communicated His holiness also, for the formation of her laws ; He communicated to her His power also, and in such a manner, that as yet hardly born in Judea, she divinely triumphed throughout the world. After many revolving ages that time had arrived, of which He Himself had predicted, “yet a little while and I will shake all nations.” Miraculous commo-

tion; since it was not made with the sound of terrible trumpets, nor with neighing of warlike steeds; but with the voice, hateful certainly to Pagans, of a few Hebrews; and these men of low birth, of mean profession, of poor fortune; neither armed with human learning nor with eloquence. A voice nevertheless so powerful, and so highly sonorous, that it penetrated all men and shook all the corners of the earth, "All the boundaries of lands trembled at the words of the Apostles." Egypt trembled, and there the adored statues of Osiris and of Serapis were dissolved in dust: Greece trembled, and there fell to the ground the infamous temples of Venus and of Diana. Persia trembled, and there the funeral piles which were consecrated to the sun, saw themselves extinguished. Italy trembled, and all in Rome flung down those deities which fulminated proudly from the capitol. Who that at the gates of that august metropolis, could have seen S. Peter when he placed his foot there for the first time, unshod, poor, dying with hunger, dishevelled, would have believed in and would not rather have scorned that noble spirit; those lofty, generous feelings which he enclosed in his soul, feelings, mighty to overthrow the ancient superstition, and to plant there a faith before which, there would come a time when the greatest of kings would bow down their proud heads? But the omnipotent promise of the SAVIOUR, at his side, aided him faithfully;—a promise which even then was shaking the lofty throne of the Cæsars; which snatched from the hand of Jove, the dreaded thunderbolts; which guided that poor and neglected pilgrim to triumph over the mistress of the world. "He had, (says S. Chrysostom divinely) he had, fighting with him the unconquerable

power of Him Who had said, ' Upon this rock I will build My Church.' "

From that rock were sent from time to time to extend the kingdom of JESUS CHRIST, certainly not disciplined soldiers, (as the heretics and Mahometans sent to extend their sects,) but poor missionaries ; their breasts covered with nothing but zeal ; their right hands armed with nothing save a lowly crucifix. Nevertheless this expedition of people quite unarmed and unprovided with any human strength ; drove away errors, overcame customs, overturned kingdoms, conquered the world. " It overcame the world, not by the sword, but by the word."

What avails it here, to recall the most signal miracles which were wrought by that faith ; to tell of the blind who recovered their sight, of the cripples who walked again ; of the dumb people whose tongues were untied ; of the dead who rose from their biers, and sometimes returned from the tombs ? Why repeat the conflagrations extinguished by a breath ; mountains moved by a sign ; seas passed over with dry feet ; rain, hail-storms, thunderbolts, now called down, now suddenly suspended in the air ? " Whoever," (I also will say to you with the great father, S. Augustine,) " Whoever still requires wonders that he may believe, is himself the great wonder, who, the world believing, does not believe." This is the prodigy, which assumes all the others, and is admitted by all others ; to subdue so many people, " not with the sword, but by the word ;" calling men from the broad way to the narrow ; from pleasures to pain ; from honour to humiliation ; promising them rewards, which are not seen, and exposing them in the meantime, to the torments of cruel men, conspired to the total ruin of Christianity, " The

heathen rage together, the kings of the earth take counsel and the rulers have united together against His CHRIST." It is certain the Church would have succumbed to shocks so impetuous, if GOD, Who was mocking the ragings of His enemies, had not conducted her to greater elevation, through those same paths, of which the wicked made use to engulf her. Hence, she was by the Doctor S. Augustine fitly likened to the ark. By the pouring down of the rains; by the swelling of the torrents; by the overflowing of the rivers; and by the rushing and furious rising of the sea, there fell here and there, torn up, not only the cottages of the populace, but even the palaces of princes; and the proud metropolises of the land. Even the rocks and the cliffs bent their indomitable fronts, before the immense weight of the exterminating waters. Nothing more appeared, of so many lofty towers; nothing of so many strong fortresses; nothing of so many famous cities. There was heard only the devastations, which striking and reverberating the one against the other, rendered the roaring of the waves more dreadful. In the meantime the ark, although built of fragile wood, although neither governed by any pilot, nor provided with any helm, by itself alone, went boldly, and at the increase of the waters, mounted still on high. "The waters multiplied and they elevated the ark on high." By the impetuosity of the wars, fell, already cast down, the monarchies of the Chaldeans, of the Assyrians, of the Medes, of the Egyptians; the republics of Sparta, of Athens, of Carthage, of Rome. But among the persecutions implacably excited (to be silent upon every other) by the ten Roman emperors against the Church, behold her nevertheless rejoicing victoriously, "The waters multiplied and bare up the

ark." The apostles were dismembered, who like pilots ruled the unconquerable vessel; they were cut down and lacerated and crucified; the bishops were imprisoned, were tortured, were killed; with the blood of the eleven and very many thousands of martyrs, there was formed a deluge by which to drown her. But upon that same flood she floated more bold and secure. "The waters multiplied and bare up the ark." This was a spectacle certainly both of anguish to tyrants, and of glory to heaven, to see young girls, of few years of age, rejoice upon the funeral pile; bare the neck to the sword; irritate the bears, and the lions which were stretching themselves out to lick their feet; to see tender mothers with lovely little children in their arms anxiously repairing to that place, where the executioners appeared most cruel, and to offer to them those innocent lambs to be killed; to see from the funeral pile of a martyr, consumed to ashes, quickly arise as heirs of his faith, the judges who had condemned him, and the executioners who had kindled the flames. Rome was amazed at not being able either with the fire or with the sword, to reduce to nothing a people to whom it was a loss to live, and a gain to die. If to-day the Church was believed to be destroyed, to-morrow it was beheld to increase more vigorously. "The waters increased and bare up the ark." By the shock of the persecutions, and from the revolution of time, were overturned the sects of the Novatians, of the Nestorians, of the Donatists, of the Manicheans, of the Gnostics, of the Arians, and others such, even to the number of two hundred; and they were cast down, although defended by the most powerful kings, and although supported by the sword, they were cast down in such a way, that there re-

mains now nothing of them, save only some remnant, which goes dispersed, and wandering through nations; without favour, without credit, without name. It is the Church alone, which, for now nearly eighteen centuries, over the shipwrecked heads of so many heretics, from amidst the continual overflowing of so many errors; amidst the tempest and the billows of so many persecutions, always bears herself more on high; passes from shore to shore, triumphs and reigns. "The waters increased and bare up the ark." From which facts, I plainly infer, that as there is a true religion in the world, (even as the light of nature shows us, against the Atheists,) it can be no other except the one professed by the Holy Catholic Church, "without which no one is able to be saved :"—a religion which is marked out by GOD, by so many, and in such clear characters of truth, that we are able to say to it boldly, as Richard of S. Victor said, "If it is an error which we believe, we are deceived by Thee, for our doctrine is confirmed by those signs which are not able to be except from GOD." Not from elsewhere, no not from elsewhere except from GOD, can spring forth, and originate a religion so true in its teaching, so holy in its laws, so powerful in propagating itself amidst the swords and lances of its enemies. For which cause, "if it be an error, we are deceived by GOD." But no, dearly beloved, we have not been deceived. On the contrary that heavenly FATHER of every goodness infinitely loved us; He called us to His light; and consigned to us His mysteries. He sanctified us with His sacraments; He guided us and keeps us in the only true road, which leads to salvation. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of GOD." He alone can exercise that happy

judgment which distinguishes us, from so many Pagan nations, from so many heretical nations, from so many reprobate nations ; and He has done this, truly not for any merit of our own, but through the impulse of His mercy alone. Now to Him thanks and blessings ought to be given. Reflect attentively whilst I pause.

SECOND PART.

GOD therefore communicated so much efficacy to our holy religion, that ruling from sea to sea, it has captivated to the honouring of its mysteries, the acutest intellects, and has stamped its laws in hearts, hard and stubborn as a stone. "He was able from stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Now here there arises a great doubt in my mind, of which we must think attentively, for I do not know how to find the explanation easily. The doubt is this, O hearers,—how a faith which was able to satisfy so many intellects, and among them so many that were exalted ; to direct aright so many wills, and among them so many that were distorted ; does not suffice in our days to content the mind and to direct the hearts of certain free-thinkers, as they call themselves, but who are in truth rash people, born in the bosom of, but nourished as serpents, to lacerate that Church which generated them. Do you wish me to explain myself? I will do so. Innocent I. charges, from his pontifical chair, some with being erroneous, others with holding certain cunning heretical malicious propositions, disseminated in Africa by Pelagius. An Alypius, an Augustine, a Prosper, a Restitutus hear that voice ; many bishops hear it ; a great many theolo-

gians well read in human and divine science hear it; they hear it reverently, and adoring it as the voice of GOD Himself Who is speaking from His seat unanimously conclude, "By the rescript of the Pope, the cause of the Pelagians was finished, after his condemnation they were condemned over the whole world." They detest the pride of the Pelagians, who provoking them to call a council, boast at least of the glory of having constrained all the Catholic world to a journey, although they failed in the perfidious design of overturning it. "The pride of these is known to seize this vain-glory, that on their account is congregated a Synod of the East and West;—that since forsooth they are unable to pervert the Catholic world, they endeavour at least to excite it." Now from whence comes it, I resume, that a sentence very similar in substance, pronounced from the same chair, does not now find an equal docility in him, who is certainly neither a Prosper nor an Augustine? Whence comes it, that to impugn the Apostolic definitions, instead of being a sign and character of diabolic pride, should have become a proof of a noble mind? Whence comes it that against those who defend and reverence these, some one rises up arrogantly, and as Caiaphas did in the Sanhedrim, casts in their teeth, and behind them a presumptuous "Ye know nothing at all?" Whence comes it, that upon those obscure dogmas, over which Councils and Fathers passed long vigils, and after many prayers, and tears, and penances, and fasts to obtain divine light from heaven, extended their trembling hands, to write about them, whence comes it, that in these days they are discussed at jovial banquets, and amidst the foaming cups of choice wine? S. Bernard prophesied well for our times, when

to Innocent II. he wrote of his age,—Most blessed Father, watch attentively, because the evil begins to cross the mountains, and the infection extends itself throughout the flock. Certain bees are flying about, which under the honey of a sweet and devout speech have a poisonous sting. Certain books are flying about, which in appearance, restrict, but which in substance, destroy the sound and true morality of the Evangelist. “The bee which was in France contemptuously hissed the bee of Italy, . . . books fly, and a new Gospel is coined for the people.” (S. Bernard, Epis. cxviii.)

I will not dwell more at length upon a like abuse, because I hope in this honoured audience there may not be any of those of whom S. Jerome when writing, complained that “among the young women (O shame) it is philosophized concerning the sacred books.” (S. Jer. ad Paul.) But to give vent to the bitterness of my oppressed heart, I cannot do less than repeat this morning that sad and bitter question which CHRIST Himself uttered, “When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” (S. Luke xviii. 8.) Neither do I speak here of a speculative faith, I speak of a practical and working faith, of such I ask, “When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” That divine active faith, which formerly humbled the most powerful, and the proudest monarchs of the universe; would it be found in you, O ambitious man, who sacrifice your conscience to the vain ideas of honour, and the rights of justice? That faith, which despoiled the most wealthy and the richest of the age of every possession, would it be found in you, O covetous man, who are placing your only trust in riches? That faith, which inspired courage

to so many unconquerable martyrs to bear the most barbarous torments, would it be found in you, O effeminate one, who nourish your body with every luxury? That faith, which sustained so many celebrated hermits in the desert for so many years, with the bread of affliction alone, would it be found in you, O man of the world, who do not know how to moderate amusements which are fatal to your soul? That faith, which kindled in so many illustrious damsels a love so intense for purity, and a dislike so implacable for their own natural worth, would it be found in you, O woman, who seek in every way to render yourself both more bold to tempt, and more disposed, and more easy to become tempted? "When the Son of Man cometh, will He find faith?" If tyrants who are dead should again rise up against Christianity, could it be hoped that Christian men and women of the present day would be ready to pass from the card-table to the vigil, and from amusements to the cross, in order to seal their faith with their blood? I do not know, resumes S. Augustine, I know well that many men and many women would willingly cancel certain tiresome precepts, which forbid the courting too freely, the bantering too pronely, the wooing too familiarly. They cannot do so with impunity, they cannot do so. Therefore they seek to pervert those laws which will never be able to be abrogated. They call impudence vivacity, and wantonness conformity, and licentiousness politeness of life. "If it were lawful they would blot out these precepts from the Gospel; but since they are not able to blot them out, they seek to pervert them."

Oh, hearers, take care, take care, and believe that from violating the Gospel precepts by little and little, one

passes on to doubt the articles of faith, and that the modern atheism of contentious spirits springs from the heart alone,—from the heart ruined by a thousand carnalities. “The deeds of right living being cast away, the strength also of faith is wasted.” (S. Greg. Mag. Mor. xxviii. 10.) The sword, persecutions, and tyrants greatly establish the faith, they do not destroy it, and from the blood of the martyrs springs up fully ripe the harvest of Christianity. Fashion, idleness, pleasure, incontinence, these are the torrents which swamp the faith, these the fierce wild boars which uproot it. “The deeds of right living being cast away, the strength also of faith is wasted.” In order to obtain safety we have need of the faith of JESUS CHRIST. But JESUS CHRIST to maintain His faith has no need of us. He will know very well if our sins are reaching that state when they will finally weary His patience; He will know how to find a new earth, where to plant His Church; “shall be taken,” (a most terrible menace already confirmed in so many northern nations, and which He could even confirm in Italy;) “the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” (S. Matth. xxi. 43.) Let us seek, dearly beloved, to change our habits, if we do not wish that CHRIST should seek, as His great vengeance, to change His followers.

III.

THE LOVE OF ENEMIES.

"I say unto you, love your enemies."—S. Matth. v. 44.

AMONGST the greatest wonders, that would follow the birth of JESUS CHRIST, one was to be, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, that at the coming of that Prince of peace, the swords should be quickly changed into pruning-hooks, and the spears into plough-shares; that the lamb, and the wolf, the kid, and the leopard, should then be seen lying together, and that their natural fierceness being deposed, the proud lion with the innocent calf, and with the simple sheep should feed in the field. These are all symbols, we say with S. Jerome, of that mutual charity which softening the fiercest minds would cause all people to be united, however opposite in disposition and naturally unfriendly to association. And this beautiful and divine peace, flourished truly in the hearts of the primitive Christians in such a way, that the idolaters, pointing at the followers of the SAVIOUR; "Behold," (they cried astonished,) "behold how they love one another!" What infernal fury has then been able so to work, that with a wonder entirely opposite, the pruning-hooks should be reformed, in order to make lances of

them; and the plough-shares recast to be made into swords? What power has again transformed the lambs into wolves, the kids into leopards, and the gentle little flock of the Redeemer into bloody lions? Nothing else than the spirit of discord which is certainly come from hell, to poison the minds of Christians. I know, hearers, and rejoice at it, that through the laws of Christianly powerful princes, those weapons are wrenched from the hands of the furious, who in past times inundated our country with blood through civil war. The forbidden duels are now very rarely seen, and the bloody factions which frequently made Italy a kingdom divided against itself, have finally reduced her to be a subjected and ruined kingdom. But I do not know whether rancours are likewise rare, and voluntary antipathy, and certain revenge, unarmed it is true, and secret, but nevertheless cruel. Therefore to root out from human breasts, that hidden internal hatred, and to extinguish every spark, by which so fierce a conflagration might be kindled, I principally direct my discourse, O brethren, this morning; and please God, you willingly sacrificing every personal aversion to His authoritative and wise command, just now explained to you, "I say unto you, love your enemies;" that golden age may be seen renewed in you, so profitable to the extension and glory of the Christian Church, when to all the believers, there was one soul and one heart; "and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul."

Wherefore you see, O brethren, that I proceed with justice in this cause, and that I do not wish to weary you concerning the duty of mutual love. I do not condemn that sudden vehemence, which forestalling the

power of reason, can be compared to sparks, which are kindled by stones when struck together. To be grieved at the remembrance of those injuries which were done to you ; to feel your heart grow hot and your blood boil, whenever you see the offender, or when you only hear him spoken of, especially when the wound is still fresh, and is not softened by time ; these are impulses of a fiery nature, which truly act as an inducement and a temptation to sin ; but which are not sin, neither ever will be, if keeping the will in subjection, one does not allow oneself to be carried on either to malevolence, backbiting, scorn, or to any other consent to the cost of the offender ; also if one resists with opposite acts of charity, these are opportunities of merit and virtue. Nor do I deny, O brethren, that from the offender, a discreet and lawful satisfaction, is properly due, and that if you are injured, a reparation should be made for the injuries done to you. But when, however, you take this satisfaction upon your own responsibility, and not according to the rules of justice, then it cannot be allowed to any one. For in the first place,—who is the passionate man, who following the bad impulse of his envenomed mind, does not exact a satisfaction far greater than the injury received by him ? A decree is issued from Shushan that as many Hebrews as are living in the hundred and twenty-seven provinces, in which the empire of the king Artaxerxes is divided, should be put to the sword. All these unfortunate-outcasts cry bitterly, and the sad old men, and young girls, and simple youths, are full of anguish, at the heartrending sorrow when the cruel decree is unexpectedly intimated. Pale with fear, and astounded, and besprinkled with cold ashes, and covered with sackcloth, they wander through the

streets, and entreat pity. All is horror, all is tears, and all is the image of death and extreme mourning. The cruel Haman in the meanwhile, the contriver of this massacre, triumphs and rejoices. He rages cruelly with wrath, and hastens the appointed day for this bloody slaughter. But for what offence, Eternal God! is so much ruin? Hear; "that Mordecai bowed not nor did him reverence." (Esther iii. 5.) For the good Mordecai is sitting on the stairs of the royal dwelling, and does not bow to the ground whenever the proud minister ascends and descends them. Then ought an injury so trifling to be purged and cancelled with so much blood? But it may be a mortal crime, not to bend the knee to the favourite of so illustrious a Prince. If Mordecai is the offender only, let Mordecai alone, and not others, bear the punishment. No, no, but the scheme is to root up every stem of the Hebrew race. "And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone Wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus." O hasty and perverse spirit of vengeance! even in our days, thou renewest in men follies just as cruel; and through the offence of one alone, thou wishest that all may be treated as criminals, and that familiar intercourse may be refused. Between the offender, and all the relations, friends, and companions he has on earth, thou wishest that every access may be forbidden to them; that for them every evil may be devised, both in property and credit and life. More, much more hatred is transmitted as an inheritance from father to son, and it is wished to have the stains made by the grandfathers and great-grandfathers washed away with the blood of their innocent posterity. Do these appear

to you counsels of moderate men, or not rather the ravings of mad men? Upon such furious passions CHRIST now places the reins with His precept and justly commands that, hatred and rancour being extinguished, you may give Him the pleasure of every personal revenge. "I say unto you, love your enemies."

But do not imagine this precept to be new and newly intimated in the Gospel. It is a very old and natural one. It was truly said to the ancients, "hate him who offends thee;" "ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt hate thy enemy." But this was said by some learned scribes who from the Divine command to love thy friend inferred as a most fallacious consequence another precept, namely, that of hating the offender: to the "love thy friend" in Leviticus, by their own caprice, they added the command, that "thou shalt hate thy enemy." GOD never gave such a precept, nor such a permission. He even commanded in Exodus that if any one should meet his enemy's ox, which might have lost its way, he ought to take compassion upon it, and take it to its home; and if he should see on his way his neighbour's ass, fallen under its burden, he should run with his enemy to help it out. "If thou meet thy enemy's ox, or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again." Wherefore you observe moreover, that you are obliged, and greatly obliged, to exercise those offices of politeness, kindness, and charity, which are commonly practised among friends, if the person who offends you is a friend, or with a person in the same position as yourself, but a stranger to you, if it is a stranger who offends you.

I will tell you besides, that GOD cannot exempt you

from this law, nor allow any person to revenge his own injuries at his pleasure, nor by his own authority. Since if it were so, the world would become, not an abode of reasonable men, but a flock of bloodthirsty beasts. As it is an act of solemn justice, to punish faults, and to exercise revenge, therefore it cannot belong to any one so to do, except to those, who have judicial power, to those even who act justly, and who are not impelled by personal hatred, nor by any rancour, but by the most pure love of justice. Take from GOD the title essentially due to Him, of a supreme and universal judge; He can abominate sin because it is opposed to His holiness; He can destroy sinners, because they are subject to His power; but He can never punish faults, and chastise the guilty, in vengeance for having offended Him.


Now where are those, says S. Augustine, who complain of CHRIST, as if with the daily "love ye," He had imposed upon them a most grievous yoke, and a burden intolerable to human strength? He did nothing else than remind us of a law, born with us, built with us, grown with us, and engraved in our hearts by nature. He has truly endeavoured to make it easy to us, adds the holy man, and to render the fulfilment of it more easy to us. Wherefore being able from the beginning to create many men, who might not be united by any other tie except that of the identity of species, He wished to create only one, that all drawing their origin from the same source might become united with a stronger, and almost with a sacred bond, even with the sameness of blood: "GOD created man one, and alone, that by this mode the unity of society might be more strongly commended, and the bond of concord, if men should be tied together, not only after

the similitude of nature, but also (beautiful words) by the affection of relationship." Oh, that you would for a little while calm your anger, so that the darkness with which your understanding remains clouded, might be cleared away; you would then know, that he who by you is esteemed your enemy, and as such challenged by you to death, is in the end your brother, son of the same father, and with you destined to the same inheritance: "When you find that you have hated your enemy, you have hated your brother, and you know it not." What monstrosity, nevertheless, is this, continues S. Augustine, never seen except among ourselves? Bears and tigers often fight through a sudden impetuosity of anger, but when the quarrel is ended, they are seen wandering peacefully through the same wood, and quietly living in the same cave. Men only, who are by consanguinity tied more strongly together, are so discordant, through vice, that citizens, who are living within the same walls, do not know how to live together in peace, and under the same roof, and at the same table, regard each other with an evil eye; and all day, the members of one family chide each other with bitter words, although they have but one common origin, one common country, as they have one blood. "There is nothing more sociable by nature than the race of man," alas, what perversity, "there is nothing so discordant as vice."

But if every man, whoever he may be, and of whatever station in life, becomes grievously obliged by nature to love his fellow-creature, although an enemy, and to respect in others the ties of blood, what shall we say then of Christians, professors of one law, which is entirely a law of love, children of one Church, whose

device is the union of hearts ; all regenerated by JESUS CHRIST, nourished with His flesh, sanctified with His sacraments, incorporated and made one with Him? We are "members of His body and of His flesh and of His bones." O holy Apostle of the Gentiles! you who would not hear amongst the first Christians even the different name of Jew and of Greek—"There is no distinction between Jew and Greek"—what would you say, what would you say, when beholding in Christians of our day, malevolence so bitter, hatred so inveterate? Would you say that these could be members of JESUS CHRIST, who mutually slander and backbite each other? And in truth, listeners, I will no longer tell you, that in hating your enemy you hate your brother; you have hated a brother, but I will tell you that you hate your sweet and amiable SAVIOUR. "When you find an enemy to be hateful, you have hated CHRIST and you know it not."

It is at least certain that CHRIST in the Gospel, no less called those acts of love His own, which were done to a fellow-creature, than He called those enmities, hatreds, and rancours His own, which were also done to a fellow-creature. Therefore those calumnies wounded Him, with which you sought to destroy the reputation of your enemy; that ridicule, with which you sought to destroy his fame; those taunts, with which you sought to inflame him to anger; those plots, by which you tried to drive him from his post; those swords, with which you desired to pierce the heart of your enemy. All these wound CHRIST directly in the apple of His eye. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of My eye." (Zech. ii. 8.) For the common law of brotherly love may well be called the apple of the eye of JESUS CHRIST. This



among all the others He called His own law ; He wished that this might be the mark by which to know His followers ; this, at the end of His days, He entreated from His FATHER with unutterable groans. " I pray, FATHER, that they also may be one, as We are one ; I pray, FATHER, that they may be made perfect in love ; I pray, FATHER, that the love with which Thou hast loved Me may be in them." This law, when near death, He left as His precious inheritance, " peace I leave you, My peace I give unto you." Of this law, when dying, He gave us that memorable example, when, having forgotten His pains, and His most atrocious injuries, which were endured by Him, He entreated pardon for His cruel crucifiers, and when dying, bent His afflicted head towards them, in sign of peace : " FATHER, forgive them, for they know not what they do ; and having bowed His head, He gave up the Ghost." As soon as Jacob was dead in Egypt, his sons then feared very much that Joseph might recall to his mind the injuries which they had done him, and that he might at once revenge himself with their lives. Wherefore a council was held among them, and they sent unto him, saying, that their most compassionate father, at the end of his mortal career, had told them, to remind Joseph, and to entreat him, in his father's name, that in his kindness he would pardon any unkindness which his cruel brothers had done him. " Thy father commanded us before he died that we should say these words of his to you : Forgive, I pray thee, now, the wickedness of thy brethren."

The good Joseph had scarcely heard his dear father's wish, when his heart was wounded as with a most acute

dart, he was melted to fountains of tears, and tenderly fell on the necks of the traitors. No, do not fear, he said to them; you betrayed me, it is true, you sold me, and loaded me with a thousand most grievous injuries; but the last words of my dying father have made more impression upon me than all your injuries; stay with me, secure, tranquil, and happy, I will nourish you all, I will nourish your poor little family. So my father commands, so let it be done. "Which words being heard, Joseph wept, he wept, . . . and answered, . . . Fear not; I will feed both you and your little ones." Now was not this, O my beloved brethren, was not this the last wish of that most gentle and loving Father; that you should love those who offend you; that you should receive them to your favour; and that in reward for that love which induced Him to die for your salvation, you might blot out from your memory your injuries, and their ribaldry? "Your Father," may be said with truth to each one of you, "Your Father commanded before He died that I should speak these words of His to you: I beseech you to be forgetful of the wickedness of your brethren." Do you not at all feel moved and affected by these words? And can you constantly refuse peace? Refuse it to that dying GOD Who begs it of you? "I say unto you, love your enemies." He begs it of you not so much for the desire that His gentleness may be imitated by you, "that you may be the children of your Father," as for the earnestness itself of your good. "For I think" (says S. Chrysostom seasonably) "that He commanded this, not only for our enemies, but how much more for our own sakes."

And oh, that I might have this morning, the spirit of

Jeremiah, so that I might address myself to the weapons of the serevengeful men and cry out, "Sword, sword, how long will it be ere thou be quiet?" (Jer. xlvii. 6.) And how long wilt thou persevere in devastating Italy, where, on thy account, so many large houses are weeping because they are laid even with the ground; where, on thy account, so many of the most splendid family estates are wasted, and so many brilliant families are driven to misfortune; where so many have wandered for ever from their country; where so many were despoiled of their property by the failure of the exchequer; where so many with difficulty spent their life in secret, or infamously finished it upon the scaffold; and where so many miserably fell in the act of revenging themselves, without funeral rites, or the song of priests? "They were buried with the burial of an ass." (Jer. xxii. 19.) But if you should say, O passionate men, that you did not wish for a revenge so dreadful, whereby so great destruction must come to pass; you cannot deny, says S. Augustine, that as long as you nourish any wrath or spite, you have within you a passion which troubles, agitates, and torments you. It torments you to see your enemy loved, it torments you to hear his name praised, it torments you to see his happy success. O! from how many doubts, from how many cares, from how many bitternesses you would become freed by a generous and sincere pardon. "You fret, you perplex yourself, who can by pardoning live in quietness," but this is little, "you can, by pardoning, pray afterwards." Yes, brethren, you can pray with confidence to have from GOD a most perfect pardon of your faults. "If ye forgive men" (these are infallible promises of JESUS CHRIST) "if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly

FATHER will also forgive you." Behold, says S. Chrysostom, what penitents formerly did, and what they continually do to obtain pardon for their sins. Some pass the night in long meditations; others melt their hearts in bitter tears; some lay themselves uncomfortably on the cold ground; others torment their flesh with rough hair girdles; others draw their blood with horrible instruments. "Some by praying, others by keeping vigil, others blot out their sins by lying on the bare ground," and after that still weep afflictedly. "Who knoweth if He will return and repent?" (Joel ii. 14.) To you, who are offended, it is granted to obtain the same, not only more easily, but more sincerely, by giving sincere pardon to your offenders. "A more easy way is granted to you to obtain this, viz., by being angry with no one." (S. Chrysostom.) Ah, dearly beloved, ah, dearly beloved! the injury which was done to you is cruel: I do not dispute it. The offender is a wicked man: he may be so. I do not question at this moment whether you may be of rather a tender, proud, restless, fantastic, punctilious spirit, I do not seek to know whether by your manner you may have provoked the outrage and the injury. I demand only if you have sins, and many sins, and great sins, whereby you may fear eternal vengeance from heaven? But if you have, and still nourish in your soul an obstinate aversion for your neighbour, how can you say to the LORD, "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors?" Do you not fear, do you not fear, that this, in itself, holy and healthful petition, through your malice, may be changed into a dreadful sin, and into the perpetual damnation of your soul? Do you not fear that God may hear that impious prayer upon your lips?

Yes, He will hear it, says CHRIST, He will hear it, and you will obtain exactly what you ask. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your FATHER forgive your trespasses."

But lastly, let us consider the defence which the revengeful are so wont to adduce to justify the passion of anger, which is by all the learned called both weak and blind. They say, that pardoning an enemy occasions irreparably the loss of their honour, and that the not appearing brave and resentful, is voluntarily covering their faces with the ignominious stain of timidity and cowardice. Thank God that the certain crafty men cannot broach this nonsense to me, who study to revenge themselves, by grumbling, by snares, by calumny, by ways so hidden, so sordid, so traitorous, that it would turn to their highest ignominy if ever they should be discovered. To those, therefore, who proceed openly, and, as with a strong shield, avail themselves of their honour, I also answer openly, that they ought to show me that zeal, by preserving uncontaminated their conjugal fidelity, without laying malicious snares for another's wife; by conversing politely without rudeness of jesting and using obscene words; by dealing honourably without the duplicity of intrigues and of frauds; by paying their debts punctually, without putting the merchants and tradesmen off from year to year. May God preserve me, hearers, from profaning with irreverent satire the holiness and greatness of my ministry. Finally, I should have much to say concerning those who are magnanimous braggarts about their honour. I say, rather, that one may acquire a true honour by bravely defending one's own life when unjustly assailed by an adversary. I say that I have not that

offensive opinion of chivalrous laws which those have, who think them opposed to the Gospel. I say I know that in this eminent town there are proper persons who, by judgment, by authority, by counsel, can soothe and calm those discords. I should say they have, by their interposition, ended many questions much more difficult and intricate than yours. But if passion, spite, and anger darken your understanding so much that you think it impossible to pardon an enemy, and save your honour, I say to you finally, I say to you, that it is not my task to discuss what you may, and what you may not do, according to the foolish judgment of this mad world. It only concerns me, as a minister of the Gospel, to declare the will of GOD to you. Therefore He commands you to forgive your enemy any injury whatever. "I say unto you, love your enemies." Let me see whether in the presence of that CHRIST you dare to bring forward splendour of blood, antiquity of birth, greatness of title, and other like pretexts of your world. Miserable creatures that you are, you are however servants of the great Monarch, to whose wishes the powers of heaven are bent. Come, come, then, most vile clay, and whatever thou art, and in whatever way beautified and adorned, listen to GOD who speaks to thee: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD: thus saith the LORD, love thy enemies." This is His will, and He wills it, on eternal pain of most tormenting fire. Truly it will be a very honourable thing to go into Hell with weapons in your hand, and there, proud man, to tell your mighty acts, and to boast there your title and your dignity! What dignity? What reputation? What honour? Do these appear trifles and nonsense to you

with which to answer a God Who speaks? "The Divine precept being thundered out, it is to be obeyed and not disputed." (S. Aug. De Civ. Dei, xvi. 12.)

But stop, I make much more of your honour than you do yourselves ; for I do not care so little for your reputation, or, let us rather say, the resentments of your embittered mind, that I should wish you to sacrifice them to the commands of a Prince, or of a woman, who is rendered arrogant by your most vile weakness ; no, beloved.

I think that with a sacrifice so rare, and to your embittered heart so painful, no one is worthy of it except God : that good, piteous God, Who for your love sacrificed everything—His blood, His life, His reputation, His dignity. He, with His own mouth, begs this sacrifice of you : He begs you "love your enemies," therefore what do you answer? Do you wish nevertheless to persevere obstinately in your old hatred, and to follow the laws of this raving world, rather than submit yourself to the most holy law of the Gospel? But pray, behold, behold, that bloodless corpse, who begs for peace. It is the corpse of that JESUS, Who, by S. Augustine was called the release from every difficulty—"JESUS CHRIST, the release from every difficulty." It is the corpse of that JESUS, Who was able in Himself to extinguish the just and grievous anger of an offended God—"He reconciled us to God, having slain the enmity in Himself," (Eph. ii. 16, Vulg.)

And in this sacred, bloody corpse, will you refuse to extinguish your anger? And will you remain deaf to the loud cries which, in order to reconcile you, are elicited from those wounds? No! I cannot suppose that in this chosen band of Christian hearers, there can

be any one who can wish to refuse this morning that comfort to CHRIST when He begs it. But if there were any one with so hard a heart, who will not be softened, either by the equity of the law, nor by the greatness of the promises, nor by the example and prayers of that crucified GOD; may the most tremendous predictions of the royal Psalmist be verified in him. Let him be by his hatred and by his anger torn to death as by a fierce devil. Let him one day fall into the hands of justice, and when condemned, let him come from prison to the gallows. Let the ear of every one be shut to his lamentation, and let his defence be considered as a crime. Let his wife for ever remain a widow, and his children hungry, and vagabonds; neither let them find any one to shelter them, nor any to feed them. Let the remembrance of him who places his glory in revenge, be covered as with a dark forgetfulness, and let the memory of his sin be for ever remembered. In Thee may it live, O my GOD, and from Thee may it draw eternal ruin upon the miscreant. Let Thy malediction be as a garment surrounding him, nay, like penetrating oil, let it pierce into his bones and even to his marrow. Let such be the end of him, who will not obey Thy law; and of him, who, so much lacking humanity, refuses to use mercy towards his neighbour—"That He may cut off the memory of them from the earth. Because that he remembered not to show mercy." (Psalm cix. 15, 16.)

SECOND PART.

Until now, we have spoken to those who are offended, and we have adopted the strongest and most valid argu-

ments to induce them to lay their anger down at the foot of this cross, and to pardon offences. Now I speak to you offenders, I speak to you who are the offenders; for I have also to say to you this morning in the name of my LORD—"Go thy way . . . be reconciled to thy brother," and haste with such speed because thou dost not dare to present thyself at His altar, neither canst thou hope for any pity from Him, if first of all thou hast not given a full and proper satisfaction to him whom thou didst offend—"if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift," (since GOD does not wish for any offering but love) "and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother." (S. Matth. v. 23, 24.) If, therefore, (most true conclusion of S. Augustine,) "if we have injured a brother in anything, the journey is for reconciliation." And oh! how many implacable enmities would be prevented, and how much cruel passion would be quenched, if he, who through inconsideration and through anger, has forgotten the injury which he did his brother, acknowledging his fault, would immediately say to him as the prudent Abraham once said to Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee . . . for we be brethren." (Gen. xiii. 8.) If putting down his pride, with evangelical and holy moderation either personally, or through the kindness of wise and honoured men, he would intreat compassion and would now make his defence, how many enmities, I resume, would be prevented! But if you refuse this right to the offended man, although from him it may not come, as it is required of a true Christian—neither may you fear any revenge—do you believe for all that, offenders, that the

wrongs which you have done will remain unpunished?" No, says GOD clearly by the mouth of His prophet—"Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense." (Heb. x. 30.) I truly wish that the offended may purge their hearts from malice; and that they may not stretch forth their hands to punish their neighbour—"I say unto you, love your enemies." (S. Matth. v. 44.) But in like manner I command, and strictly too, that the offenders present to their neighbour, both a sufficient and legitimate satisfaction—"I say to you, go thy way, be reconciled to thy brother," otherwise, I Myself will take revenge on the wicked, and will demand of them an account of their offences—"Vengeance is Mine, I will recompense." O, most just command of our GOD! Who like a Father, does not prefer one child to another, and only desires that His children may mutually love and respect each other. Now who can refuse to submit himself to laws so discreet, and to bend to these sweet precepts of the SAVIOUR? Jacob was flying from Mesopotamia, and with all his family, was returning to his own country. When Laban heard this, so great was his anger, that he took with him his servants, completely armed, and full of ill-will, followed, he followed in the track of the fugitives. After the trying march of seven days, he overtook his children, who had encamped in Gilead; and GOD appearing to him in a dream, said to him, Beware, O Laban, beware of doing any violence to Jacob; nay, beware of speaking one word to him of insult and contempt—"Take care that thou speak not to Jacob, good or bad." Jacob now seeing at break of day his persecutor close to him, trembled and became pale, not caring so much for himself, as for his poor little family, whom he saw all exposed to the

fury of his enemy, without any escape except in tears and prayers. Then Laban said, O Jacob, thou hast indeed dealt badly with me; taking away my daughters, as the vilest slaves, and with insult; and besides stealing my images, without at all respecting the holy laws of religion and of blood. I could, as thou canst see, now afflict thee; I could with this sword avenge the injuries which thou hast done me—"It is in the power of my hand to do thee hurt," but fortunately for thee, the LORD has this night forbidden me to take revenge—"but the GOD of thy father spake unto me yesternight, Take thou heed, that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad." Let us therefore make, in homage to that divine command, let us make peace, and let this stone be a perpetual testimony of our sincere and eternal reconciliation—"Now, therefore, come thou, and let us make a covenant . . . and this pillar be witness." Nobles, plebeians, citizens, all my hearers, of whatever rank and condition you may be—"It is," yes, "it is in the power of your hand to do evil," for not only have lions large talons, but wasps also a sting, with which to wound him who irritates them. You could, therefore, I do not deny it, find a way to mortify him who offends you, and to ruin him, his interests, and his family—"It is in the power of your hands to do evil, but the LORD said to you, Do it not." Beware of wounding him, even with the tongue, beware of calumny, beware of abuse, beware of satire.—"Take thou heed, that thou speak not either good or bad." Is it possible that the command once intimated by God in a dream could be sufficient to repress the wrath of an idolater, so openly thirsting for revenge; and that the command of God Himself, so clearly intimated in

His Gospel, is not sufficient to destroy strife in you Christians? "But I say unto you, love your enemies; go thy way, be reconciled to thy brother." Peace, therefore, dearly beloved Christians, let us make peace. And this living, peculiar stone, this JESUS, Who was able to reunite in perfect friendship an infinite God, Who was offended with rashly offending man—"hath made both one; having made peace through the blood of His cross, whether things in earth or things in heaven." (Ephes. ii. 14; Coloss. i. 20.) Let it be a perpetual testimony, that not for vain human considerations, but through obedience alone to the Divine will, and to the holy laws of the Gospel, laying aside your hatred and forgetting your wrongs, you may mutually give pardon and peace—"Come thou, come thou, let us make a covenant . . . and this pillar be a witness." (Gen. xxxi. 52.)

IV.

SINFUL OPPORTUNITIES.

"Then was JESUS led up of the Spirit into the wilderness . . . and when He had fasted forty days the tempter came to Him, &c."—S. Matth. iv. 1—11.

If I did not know perfectly, that He Whom the prince of darkness is encountering, is JESUS CHRIST, Who is sinless by nature, Who is of divine power, and the destroyer of the works of the devil, the mere looking at the circumstances of this new and terrible combat would be sufficient for me to predict with confidence, upon which of the two combatants victory would descend. I see a solitary desert, a most remote solitude, apart from any human habitation. This is not a suitable field for the tempter to reap a victory in. I see a poor anchorite, poorly clad, and bearing in His countenance the traces of a forty days' fast. But this one, is a man furnished with an armour, impenetrable to the darts of the enemy. Lastly, I see that the devil approaches the former to tempt, as if he had all power to lead him into temptation. In spiritual conflicts defeat generally befalls him who is most bold. In fact, do I not prove it to you? Behold the devil to be conquered three times; disgraced and confused,

he plunges into hell, there to wear himself out by his scorn and by eternal fury—"The devil leaveth Him." Now, truly, according to the saying of S. Augustine, JESUS, our Captain, willed at this time to sustain such fierce assaults in order to conquer, by His temptations, the temptations of ourselves, who are miserable and weakened—"He was tempted, lest we should be overcome by temptation." (Enarr. Ps. xci.) Whence does it ever happen, dearly beloved, that against an adversary already subdued, our triumphs are so rare, and our losses so frequent? Would you know the reason why? It is because we wish to fight according to pleasure, and not according to the examples which the SAVIOUR gave us in His warfare. He gave us an example of solitude, and we wish to fight according to the life of the age. He gave us an example of austerity, and we wish to fight in the midst of effeminacies. He gave us an example of flight, and we wish to fight, provoking, and becoming the tempters of the tempter himself. Let us speak more plainly. We pretend to conquer amidst the strongest occasions of ruin. This, you see, is the origin of our continual and most disgraceful defeats. Behold therefore, O Christians, the truth which I take in hand to show to you in my sermon, that he hopes in vain for victory and freedom from sin, who intentionally puts himself in the way of committing sin; because, either the occasion of committing sin is a near occasion, and to boast of victory from it is a manifest contradiction of terms: or the occasion of committing sin is a remote occasion, and the expecting of victory from it is the presumption of a deluded soul. Let us examine this point.

It is desirable, firstly, to distinguish between a twofold class of near occasions of sinning. Some of these are such that they have of themselves a peculiar and intrinsic malignity ; and they are those, which by themselves, lay hold of men and generally drag them into sin : others are such as guard the particular inclination of each one ; and they are those from which, although the greater part of the people escape free, you nevertheless, through the fatal experience which you already have, frequently remain snared and trapped—"There exists a near moral occasion, when by its own nature it is such, that it frequently leads men to sin." Behold the first occasion, which seized David when he beheld Bathsheba privately washing herself in her domestic bath. "Or it remains by trial to produce such an effect in this man." Behold the second occasion, of which you perhaps can, through your great misfortune, serve for an example.

Now it is of such temptations as these, hearers, that I told you, that to expect victory from them is a manifest contradiction of terms. For what contradiction is there or can there be, more evident, than to say, "I don't wish to sin," in the same moment in which I sin in reality ? I sin in reality ; inasmuch as that law which forbids the sinful action, at the same time and with sternness forbids the willingly placing oneself in those guilty circumstances which are wont to be the accompaniments of that same action ; so that, as S. Augustine teaches, the entering into those guilty circumstances, and into the sin is the same thing—"By this means because they run thither, they are overcome." (Ser. lxiii.) Sodom gives us an example ; and what Sodom was, and how infamous it was, it is neither needful nor modest now to remind you.

It is sufficient to say that of the people of the city ten persons could not be found who were not contaminated by its filth. Now when the angels had drawn the little family of Lot out of the infamous tumult, this was the first precept which they imposed strongly upon him, and to which they affixed a heavy punishment: that he should go straight forward upon his journey; and not even turn round within the walls, or even within the territory itself of the city; nor was he ever to dare to slacken his speed, nor to turn his face towards the city—"Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain." (Gen. xix. 17.) Truly must it have been distasteful to the good old man to come out of and to abandon a country in which every kind of delight flourished; and to leave both the dear friends, and the house, containing all its household goods; neither could he be certain at least, that he might not be tempted many times to return from whence he had already departed with so much difficulty; so that it was necessary that the angels should draw him out of it by the strength of their arms. But he was always mindful of the divine interdict not only to guard his foot from returning, but even his eyes from looking back. And oh! so might his wife have been obedient, as he was himself; but she being overcome and surprised, by a feminine desire of seeing too much, turned herself behind, and as the incautious one turned, so her body remained changed into a cold statue of salt, and, according to the opinion of many, it was cast with her soul into hell—"But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt," (Gen. xix. 26.) In this sacred narration of Scripture, several points could be seasonably considered, about the subject

of which we are treating. I could dwell upon the thought, that without the greatest grief to the human heart, those haunts in which it finds its pleasure and profit, will not be abandoned. I could dwell upon the thought, that in those who have been led out from them by Sovereign Grace, the desire is naturally kindled to return thither. I could dwell upon the thought, that the inclination for danger, affords an argument, sufficiently clear, that the inclination to sin is perpetually dwelling in them. But S. Augustine invites us to contemplate this marvellous statue; and affirms that, with such salt, GOD intends to salt the unsavouriness of miserable sinners—"The being converted into salt, furnished a seasoning to men which they may taste, and through which her example may be escaped from." (De Civ. Dei, xvi. 30.) Inasmuch as GOD forbids to you, O dearly beloved, and strictly prohibits your approaching those places, and forbids your fondly looking upon those objects, who, although not always, frequently draw you onwards to the commission of sin—"Look not behind thee and neither stay thou in all the plain." (Gen. xix. 17.) And can you boast, and can you protest with truth, that the intents of the mind are not sinful, whilst you violate in fact, that command which is as grave and real as every other? Ah! dearly beloved, "remember" (I will say to you, even I, in the words of JESUS CHRIST) "remember Lot's wife." (S. Luke xvii. 32.) That person, O lascivious one, is the stumbling-block on which you are accustomed frequently to fall. Besides the precept which forbids all unworthy conversation; and every obscene action, there is another which forbids the placing the foot, where she is found, and likewise, the

beholding of that countenance, which charms you.—“Look not behind thee . . . and neither stay thou in all the plain.” The visiting her, the toying with her, the trying to see her, is of itself a grave and fatal fall: “Remember Lot’s wife.” That gaming table, O worldling, is the rock on which you are accustomed frequently to be broken. Besides the precept which forbids the squandering away the things which GOD has given you; and the wasting so much time, which ought to be spent upon the duties that are obligatory upon a Christian man; there is another, which forbids the betaking yourself in any way, to the club, and likewise the gazing upon those cards, which allure you: “Look not behind thee . . . and neither stay thou in all the plain.” The returning to that game, the taking part in it, the contemplating it alone, is of itself a mortal sin to the soul—“Remember Lot’s wife who, being changed into salt, furnished a seasoning to men, whence that example may be avoided.”


Neither can the impossibility, which is conceived by you, of such a flight, avail at all, to deliver you from this law, nor the saying that you are an Amnon, necessitated by rank, necessitated to see, to converse, and live with his sister Tamar. For follow this reflection with me, by which I intend clearly to convince you, that all the impossibilities which are adduced, of abandoning the most evident dangers, are the most vain pretexts, and that passion alone, is the knot which binds, and which renders necessary, these iniquitous connections. As long as the incestuous young man burned with love for Tamar, it was not possible for him to absent himself from her. She appeared to be not only

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necessary for his cure, but for the sustaining of his life itself. There was no one except her, who knew how to prepare the savoury dishes, which he, being sick and weak, could relish—"Come and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat at her hand." (2 Sam. xiii. 6.) But as soon as this love, by what accident I know not, was changed into hatred, all those pretended necessities immediately vanished; and needing her services no longer, he commanded the attendant to expel her from the chamber, and to close the door after her: "Put now this woman out from me, and bolt the door after her." (2 Sam. xiii. 17.) And what can be the value of the truth of these necessities, so many of which we see broken through every day, for human ends, or for a new passion, unexpectedly arisen to extinguish the former one? When a great and sensible wrong is received, is it not sufficient to make us take a lasting divorce from that same person, from whom neither exhortation, nor the threats of the confessor could ever dissuade or remove us? Then the profit and the advantages which arose to us by holding her near, are no longer thought of. Then no longer is it feared to expose to public outrage, the reputation of others and our own. Then it is no longer cared for, if she lives far away from us. All the impossibilities of leaving her, are consumed by the hatred into which our first love is changed. I see clearly that this is a profane abandonment, and through its motive, which is manifestly sinful. But nevertheless it rejoices me, to conclude thus powerfully; you therefore lie to God, when you dare to say, and to protest, that those difficulties, and those obstacles, draw you away from the rigorous observance of His law,

which you overcome with so much facility, when pride, or ambition, or anger, or interest, may command them.

Besides, my dearly beloved brethren, is it not these same difficulties, that JESUS CHRIST commands us to overcome, in order to free our souls from the stumbling-block? Are not those divine words of the Gospel His, and pronounced by His lips? "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee." (S. Matth. v. 29,) There is no place given to plasters and soothing medicines: "If it offend thee, cut it off," cut off immediately, every intrigue; "If it offends thee, pluck it out," root out from the heart every affection; "If it offend thee, cast it from thee;" not only cut it off, and root it out, but throw away quickly to destruction, whatever thing, although it is most dear to the eyes and to the hands, and most necessary to the feet: "If it offend thee, cut it off, pluck it out, cast it from thee." It will be however better for you to abandon the occasion, and to find salvation, than for you and the occasion both, one day, to go to hell without a refuge. Since your state is properly a state of damnation: a state in which you are unworthy of the sacraments, unworthy of absolution; a state in which there is no priest, of dignity so great, of authority so available, who is able to give it to you. And when indeed, you may find any one, either so yielding to your supplications, or so credulous to your feigned promises, who should give it to you, to liberate you from your sins, he would become himself guilty, of having profaned in you, the blood of JESUS CHRIST. "Out of Sodom," (zealously cries on that account, the most eloquent S. Gregory Nazianzen,) "Let us depart out of Sodom, lest we remain in any part of the neighbour-



ing region, lest we look around us." (Orat. xxv.) A violent saying I grant it. But what a legitimate and just inference may be derived from this. Just such an one as this. Therefore, one ought to guard oneself betimes from every occasion of sin, although remote: I mean from those occasions, which the more readily become near occasions of sinning, I mean from those, to the flatteries of which, although until now, you may seldom, or never have believed, nevertheless the returning with pleasure, and the feeling sometimes the conflict within you, ought to make you cautious that expecting victory from them, in the long run, is a presumption of an unreal mind. I do not say indeed that there is any precept concerning these occasions, which particularly compels you to abandon them. But God through His mercy only, rescued me even from these occasions of sinning, by separating me from the perverted world; I exhort you who are living amongst its snares, to live prudently, and as in a place of snares with great caution: "I have no commandment of the LORD, yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the LORD to be faithful." (1 Cor. vii. 25.)

S. Gregory Nyssen observed, not without great acumen, that in the first days of the world, the light delayed to show itself on the horizon, till it was called by the voice of the Creator to show the glory of its rays; whereas on the contrary, the uncalled for darkness unfolded its dense veil, and enveloped everything with a deep gloom: "When the heaven and the earth were created, light indeed waited for the divine decree, that it might be made: but darkness existed even without the decree." (Hom. in Hex.) It happens not otherwise with

man, who is a microcosm. Before the luminous works of virtue arise to embellish us, how many labours, commands, counsels, and toils are still demanded from the divine grace and mercy? Sin by itself, on this account called "darkness," by the Apostle, from the vile clay of which we were formerly composed, naturally rises to encumber our souls, and there to encamp. Nevertheless let the external impulses of the devil and of the world cease; as long as we bear this tumultuous and rebellious flesh, we have within us, an enemy by itself able to lead us captive—"Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." (S. James i. 14.) This tempted a Bernard amidst the shades of his Clairvaux; this, a Benedict amidst the prickly shrubs of his Subiaco; this, a Francis amidst the snows of his Alvernia: this tempted a Paul, amidst the divine ministries of his apostleship. And without going through histories so far back; do you not yourselves prove these domestic temptations? do you not endure them in your body? Ah! but if you dare to dissemble, S. Augustine would be ready to belie you: "If you do not suffer these things, pardon ye: we will not believe you." (C. Jul. ii. 8.) But this is just (resumes the holy man with marvellous force) what I cannot understand; how, when having an adversary so terrible, and as yet unsubdued, you can go and pick up quarrels with a fierce host of other enemies; such as are concealed in banquets, in theatres, in balls, in visits of compliment, and in courtships; and by the side of concupiscence, which is prone to the precipice, you further add to the stimulus of the occasion to sin: "Do not wish to add enemies to yourself. First overcome those with which you were born;

whilst these are not subdued wherefore do you provoke the bands of concupiscence?" (S. Aug. Enarr. Ps. lvii.) In order to remain victorious, it is necessary that not only should your flesh be of brass, but that you should have your inner man armed, with a casing, more impene-trable than stone. But perhaps this may be your case, my brethren? "Is my strength the strength of stones? Or is my flesh of brass?" (Job vi. 12.) No, says the prophet Amos, certainly not. Since through the guilt contracted by our first father, the incentive to sin burnt in the posterity; do you wish to know what we have all become? A smoking firebrand just now caught up and snatched from the fire: "Ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning." (Amos iv. 11.) Let us endeavour to understand the force of this sacred and prophetic similitude. In the cold evenings of winter, when you are sitting with your family telling tales around the hearth, one of your little children, for an innocent amusement, suitable to its age, draws from the hearth a piece of wood that is burning at one end, and whirling it quickly in a circle, is delighted at seeing that band of fire, which as he thinks, is formed in the air; and he seeks your praise for his pretty pastime. When the ember is extinguished, the ribbon of fire vanishes, and little by little the firebrand smoulders away in smoke. But what is it that makes the child anxious to return to his accustomed play? He puts the smoking firebrand to the fire, which before touching it, quickly bursts out into a flame, and burns brightly as it did at first. The similitude is as divine, as the application is clear. Yet reflect, my Christian brethren, that those books are a flame, in which nothing else is treated of, save love:

those countenances are a flame, which are decked out with all the elegance of feminine art: those young men are a flame, who are so foppish in dress, and so affable in manner: and those pictures, and those scenes, and those mixed meetings, are all so many flames. "The flame of devouring fire." (Isa. xxix. 6.) It would be truly a great miracle, if the incentive to sin, which is as much disposed to break out afresh, as a firebrand just now snatched from the fire, did not become rekindled when near so many flames. "Ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning." (Amos iv. 11.) You will sin, sooner or later, believe me, you will sin: and even when decorum, or any other civil human consideration, may restrain you from certain sins, which the world itself condemns, and which it considers to be hateful; for all that, it will not restrain you from many others in the world, which are not apparent to the senses, but which are nevertheless deadly sins. You will sin, not outwardly in action, but inwardly in desire, in pleasures, in a base compliance: "For it is an impossible deliverance to be surrounded with flames and not to burn." (S. Cyprian.)

It was, O hearers! to guard himself from these flames, that S. Paul kept his body under and brought it into subjection, when his apostolate compelled him to converse with every kind of person. It was to escape these flames that S. Jerome incessantly exhorted the most high-born maidens and the Roman matrons to devote themselves to solitude. It is to extinguish these flames, that Holy Church teaches us to supplicate the LORD, that it may please Him to rain from heaven that dew, with which He once sprinkled the three young men who were

lying in the furnace at Babylon ; which celestial dew, or to speak more plainly, seasonable divine grace, we ought to hope for, O Christians ! and certainly to expect, in all those occasions of sin, which by the schoolmen were called necessary :—those which are indeed inseparable from our present being, and from our present state, and which cannot be avoided, except with much difficulty, as long as we live socially in a world which is everywhere besprinkled with pitch and burning sulphur. For God may be faithful, and in the temptations which happen to us, He may have promised to assist us with that grace, by which He formerly made a defence and a shield to the innocent Josephs and to the chaste Susannahs. (1 Cor. x. 13.) But that you should expect preservation from Him, in the occasions to sin, which are introduced by evil custom, whither idleness, fashion, and sloth lead you ; I do not know upon what foundation you can build this your hope. GOD never promised this triumphal help, either by the mouth of His prophets, or by the tongue of His disciples. Nay, on the contrary, He has protested that in these voluntary dangers He will permit you to fall into perdition. “ Sit not at all with another man’s wife . . . lest thou fall into perdition with her.” (Ecclus. ix. 9.) I never read without great wonder, that which happened to the Israelites who were encamped in Paran. Kindly listen to me, so that the incident may serve you for a useful precept. The people beheld the corpses of those who had been smitten, by a sudden and fearful death, stretched upon the ground, of those who by an evil report of the nomadic tribes, had represented Canaan, as a cruel country and full of giants. Upon the break of day, fully armed, the people came before Moses, boldly saying,

that they wished to go up and to turn themselves to battle. This is not the day, answered Moses, nor is this the way to present yourselves for a trial, the success of which depends, rather upon heavenly and seasonable divine help, than upon your own valour. Return then quickly to your tents; for, if you advance, your enemies will sally from their strong-holds, and GOD will certainly abandon you to their hands. "Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies; for the Amalekites, and the Canaanites, are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword," (Numb. xiv. 42, 43.) And so it happened exactly: for the bold people, by a deplorable whim of the human heart, (that of fearing all things, where there is reason to hope, and daring all things, where there is reason for fear,) deeming the predictions of the holy man to be vain, pushed forward; and filled with blindness, they mounted the hill, from whence they were driven back by the barbarians, with a most universal defeat on the battle field: "But they presumed to go up unto the hill-top . . . then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites . . . and smote them and discomfited them." (Numb. xiv. 44, 45.) Now judge, O hearers! and compassionate if you can their slaughter, and excuse their boldness. With what compassion? By what excuse? If the insane people placed themselves in battle in opposition to the wise counsel of the leader; if they fought knowing that GOD denied His assistance in such a need; who would not on the contrary deride and condemn such foolish temerity? You speak the truth, O hearers! But how often by you even, does GOD cause it to be understood, both by the tongue of His angelical ministers, and by the

voice of His secret inspirations, "Go not up." Keep yourselves far from these frequent and genial and long established entertainments; because you have neither the strength by yourselves, which can suffice to resist; nor will God give you other grace except only the grace which calls you back from going to the combat, which if you abuse you will be overcome in sin: "Go not up . . . that ye be not smitten." And you who are so wise in the judgment of others, are in yourselves so stupid, and, to use the language of Scripture, so darkened, that you dare to hope for victory, at the same time that that LORD to whom it belongs to give it, causes you to know quite clearly that He will not give it to you—"The LORD is not with us." And you hope for victory at the same time, says S. Thomas Aquinas, that you kindle the wrath of God, haughtily tempting His providence? Because it is true that "when any one without necessity commits himself to the Divine help, it is really to tempt God." What necessity have you, for trying to procure a useless amusement by throwing yourself purposely there where the world has more power to seduce you? What necessity have you, for seconding your inclination by being present at certain powerful meetings which leave upon your mind the most pertinacious impressions? What necessity can you have, for visiting certain friends whose mouth is more fetid than a sepulchre; whose habit of life is more free than an atheist's? What necessity can you have, for reading certain books, either through the doctrine which they teach, or through the love-makings which they represent, or through the obscenity which they contain, written to vitiate the taste and to corrupt the heart? Is it not in very truth, to

tempt GOD? Yes, yes, continues the martyr S. Cyprian. Because GOD does not distribute without forethought the gift of His grace; nor does He ever intend, you know, that it may contribute to foment our temerity. It strengthens, it is true, our natural weakness, and supports it. But the strength with which He furnishes our souls, He wishes that we should use for flight, not for trial—"So to us who are spiritual, fortitude is given, that it may make us foreseeing, not that it may preserve us when falling into sin." As long as the fierce battles lasted in the world, which the idolaters waged against His Christians, GOD kept open the treasures of His resisting grace, encompassed their breasts with so much and such great courage that they might boldly defy the ferocity of the tyrants and the fury of the executioner. But since things having changed their complexions, the flattering occasions succeeded the executioners, and dangerous objects the tyrants; GOD changed His providence, so that against the new enemies He gives no other grace except the grace of flight, and the spirit of fear: "The inestimable pity of GOD which gave the palms in proportion to the fights: that in resisting men we should triumph over cruelty; and that we should be victorious in fleeing from the blandishments of women." Fear then, O my brethren, the natural weakness of your being: fear the gentlest breath that whispers to you the occasion to sin: fear the withdrawal of grace and of Divine help: for in that strength consists your defence and your strength—"Be ye" (thus S. Cyprian concludes in order to make you cautious) "Be ye therefore timid: that ye may become bold."

SECOND PART.

We should like to know, O Father, whether you have aimed in this sermon at certain assemblies which are the most customary and the most enjoyable of our age? What do you mean, hearers? Meetings perchance, of persons who are joined together by the ties of relationship, or of virtuous friendships, who from hour to hour assemble in the same place in order that they may there lighten their minds from the more serious occupations of the day, with some agreeable discourse; either with the news, or with learning, or with some genial game, introduced for recreation alone, not for dissipation? No, hearers, no: I have not intended to speak of these meetings; for I know that the doctrine of S. Thomas teaches such amusements to be not only lawful but necessary; as necessary as it is for the bow to be unstrung from time to time so that it may not break: "it is necessary sometimes to use such things for the purpose of quieting the mind." (Sum. Theol. ii. 2, q. 168. Art. 2.) It is true, hearers, that even in these amusements sin may sometimes be present, since the devil lays his snares everywhere; but the occasion in itself is so remote, that they cannot be forbidden without entirely destroying society.

But if you mean meetings which are not such as these, and which were not customary in the days of this holy man, I on the contrary demand of you, whether there is danger that you may so dissipate yourselves in these meetings, that the greater part of your time may be wasted which is strictly due to the performance of domestic duties, and to Christian habits? Is there danger that you may

lightly overstep the bounds prescribed by sobriety? Is there danger that you may dissipate at the gaming-table that which ought to be given to the poor of JESUS CHRIST? Is there danger that you may enter boldly upon the deciding of certain doubts which are agitated concerning religion? Is there danger that you may lay yourself out even to wound with gentle detraction the fame of another? If there is not danger, pursue then, O beloved, this your social entertainment, for I wish you to live as secular Christians, and not as solitary monks. But if you bring forward as an example of such meetings the assemblies of bedecked women and vain men, Tertullian would call them so many billows which awaken the sparks from the warm and smoking concupiscence: "The very same, that more accomplished intercourse of men and women; the very same consent by converse, blows the sparks of lust into a flame." It is even of these, that I have intended to treat, yes, hearers, even of these.

I see clearly that the lower orders, when they hear the ministers of the Gospel thundering from the pulpit against this abuse, I see, I say, that they sleep tranquilly: because they think that the storm goes to discharge itself upon the high mountains. But let these be awakened, let them be awakened, because I speak this morning even of them. I speak of their assemblages of ill-disposed persons; I speak of their bands, I speak of their feasts, I speak of their mutual love-makings which they carry on so incautiously. And I say so much the more of them as that these miserable ones need a certain human but nevertheless polished armour of civility, of gravity, of modesty; since they are commonly more disordered in their actions, and more free in their speech, and more obscene

in their jests, and more bold in tempting, and therefore more disposed to deadly wounds. It is very true notwithstanding, that decorum is also a very frail protection against the ferocious assaults of passion; and that every light disappears where passion encumbers the soul with its darkness.

But to leave this intricate question, I willingly grant to each one to examine earnestly his conscience, and I give from a most appropriate example of Scripture a certain rule by which to examine it. Saul one day entered into the cave of Engedi, where he remained taking rest, since the darkness which filled the cave did not allow him to perceive his danger. David remained concealed with the choice men of his officers in a more secret part of the cavern. He quickly saw his enemy, who had come by himself to throw himself so to speak, into a snare. Grief and wrath inviting him to free himself from his implacable and fierce persecutor, and the sword already unsheathed, he noiselessly drew nigh for vengeance. But in the midst of his anger, casting his look up to heaven and giving to God the pleasure of that stroke, he did Saul no other ill than to cut off the skirt of his royal mantle. The incautious rival not long afterwards came out from thence, and David came to the mouth of the cave, and holding up on high the skirt that he had cut off, cried, Behold, Saul, this portion of thy purple in my hands. 'I did not wish, as I could easily have done, I did not wish to take this time thy life. But learn from this, to be for the future more wary; for I do not dare to promise myself on another similar occasion to act with equal piety: "See the skirt of thy robe in my hand . . . and I killed thee not. See and know."' (1 Sam. xxiv. 11.) My honoured and most loved hearers, from this grave danger of Saul turn your atten-


tion a little to think of yourselves. Think, if some passion of yours newly awakened by that carousal where you went so fearlessly, were able also to show you certain shreds, so to speak, and certain gashes which came from the wounding of you, without your perceiving it at all, nor being put upon your guard. Imagine, if that passion could speak, "see and know" that I have cooled in a great measure that sweet conjugal love, which burned so holily within your breast: "see and know," that I have taken away from your soul, that solicitous care by which you watched over the government of your family: "see and know" that I have stolen that time from you which you were accustomed to give to works of piety: "see and know" that I have altogether deprived you of that devout frequency at the sacrament, and that simplicity of speech in the confessional without subterfuge and without confusion. If this be so, my beloved hearers, ah! be upon your guard: "Know thou, and see;" for with that facility, with which it has deprived you of the fairest ornaments which so greatly adorned the mind of the Christian, it can take away from you the life of the soul and can but give you death. I deem that I have perfectly fulfilled my ministry, by explaining to you individually the precept which relates to the fleeing from the near occasions of sin; and the counsel which would enable us to avoid its remote occasions, which so very easily change themselves into those which are near. Now do you for your parts, consider the necessity of providing yourselves against these things—concludes S. Augustine—when the dangers are so great of being overwhelmed by sin and of betraying your own souls. "Since I have fulfilled my office, do you attend to your own danger."

V.

THE UNIVERSAL JUDGMENT.

“When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory.”—S. Matth. xxv. 31.

It is alas, true, O Christians, that the wild beasts of the wood have their lairs where they can withdraw themselves from the snares of the hunter; and that the birds of the air have their nests where they can rest and pass the night tranquilly in sleep; and this adorable Son of Man alone is not able to find a refuge to defend Him from the hands of sinful men. I do not here wish to call to mind the wars which are implacably waged against Him in the shops, by swearing; in the counting houses, by usury; in the taverns, by debauchery; in the clubs, by blasphemy; in the secret chambers, by lasciviousness; in the piazzas, by slandering. I do not wish here to recall the outrages which are done to Him, in the courts, by the duplicity of the courtiers; in the palaces through the pride of the nobles; in the country through the love-making of the countrymen; in the woods through the rapacity of robbers; on the seas through the avarice of pirates; I bewail, however, when I see that in churches and under God's tabernacles, when I see that these are retreats of safety and of immorality for the knaves themselves, and for



thieves, and that JESUS cannot have rest there, nor can He find peace—"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." (S. Luke ix. 58.) But although, O sinners, you may not wish to leave any part of the world free to your GOD, He Himself reserves a place where He will finally crush your pride, and where He will in one moment, divinely avenge Himself of His offences. The valley, little in circumference, but boundless through the things that will have to be treated of there, is that *valley of Jehoshaphat*, where at once all your wars will cease, and His will begin—"There the wicked cease from troubling." (Job iii. 17.) "And His zeal will take armour." (Wisdom v. 18.) Valley, by Ezekiel called the valley of a multitude, "The valley of Hamon," i.e. multitude. (Ezek. xxxix. 15.) Valley, by Isaiah called the valley of disclosure, "The valley of vision." (Isa. xxii. 1.) Valley, which by Joel was called a valley of slaughter, "The valley of decision." (Joel iii. 14.) "Valley of multitude," because of the gathering together which will there be made of all men. "Valley of vision," because of the manifestation which will there be made of all hearts. "Valley of decision," because of the destruction which will there be made of all the wicked. These are the names, listeners, which I find are given to *the valley of the great judgment*, and these are the three points of my sermon which I will lay down to you, simply explaining the ideas of it which GOD has left to us in the Scriptures.

Upon the dawn of that day, the last day of all days, after which, the spheres ceasing from their most rapid motion, and the moon and sun having stopped from their course, the immovable eternity will irrevocably begin; the angels,

heralds of the formidable divine and last judgment, will sound the trumpets, and will make the authoritative command to be heard, "Arise, ye dead, arise." The shrill sound of those trumpets will penetrate into the tombs; will descend beneath the waters; will spread through the bowels of the earth; will resound in the deepest caverns, and in the remotest solitudes; wherefore the bodies being awakened from their long sleep, and the souls from their different resting-places, each one will resume its recomposed flesh. The elect souls will rejoice on beholding their bodies, once companions of their exile, whose members fought for righteousness; once oppressed and wearied, but now adorned again, and, according to the saying of S. Paul, clothed with immortal glory; and embracing them tenderly, they will be bound with them by a sweet and indissoluble knot. The soul of the reprobate "shall see it and be grieved." (Ps. cxii. 10.) This soul will see its own body, a body most infamous by sin, marked with all the characters of damnation, cadaverously pale in countenance, with matted hair, horrible in countenance; and terrified and angry, the soul will refuse to enter into it. Then indeed the angels, the severe executants, will say, "Enter; these are the members which you loved so much; this is the body which you once nourished so effeminately, and whose unbridled wishes were the rule and the end of your works. Behold, O unhappy one, the beauty which you adored, and mark if it ends well, by the offending of God, by the fondling of that corrupting and abominable carrion."—"Turn thee, and thou shalt see greater abominations." (Ezek. viii. 13.)

Mankind now regenerated to a new life, and the earth being obliged by God to ease itself of the great weight of

its dead, it will bring forth in one moment all nations.—“Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day, &c?” (Isa. lxvi. 8.) Then will be seen for the first time mutually, grandfathers, grandchildren, fathers, and children; wives and husbands, masters and servants, subjects and rulers. But what? No salutations, no questions, no courtesies, no sign of recognition or of honour: wherefore? “And each one will wonder at his neighbour.” Each one will remain amazed in beholding the great desolation of the earth, the squalor, the mourning, the silence, the stillness: nobles without titles; princes without insignia; masters without badges; bishops without mitres; monarchs without crowns. Every one will hear the horrible roaring of the sea, which having broken the ancient laws, will rise up from its shores to overthrow the cities. The ground will be felt to be agitated as with a formidable earthquake, and the mountains to burst with a dreadful crashing. The sun will be seen to be dressed in mourning, and the moon dropping blood, and the stars which were called by Isaiah the “host of heaven,” to fall from on high—“And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and shall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine.” (Isa. xxxiv. 4.) Men being astonished, and dumb, and terrified, through fear, and through the expectation of that, wherein so much preparation will end; will again be shaken by the angelic trumpets, which clanging horribly in the air, will say to the valley, “Let the heathen be awakened and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat.” (Joel iii. 12.) When God in the first days made to resound on the waters that admirable precept, “Let the waters be gathered together in one place,” (Gen. i. 9;) you would have *seen*, O brethren, the immense mass of the billows, which

according to the saying of the Bishop of Seleucia, were idly stagnating here and there, at the unexpected command, move from the bottom to the top; and the rivers running from the four quarters of the world, coming carefully to discharge the great flood there, where GOD wished to form of them the sea. So at the voice of the Divine criers, all the sons of Adam, who after the manner of stagnant water, for so long have been rotting in the tombs, will all be at once moved, and will advance to the valley. This journey of all men at the same moment, and directed to the same end, was evidently described by Joel. Without distinction, without tumult, without murmuring, without the honour of any precedence; deprived of boldness and of pomp, with bended head; trembling, pale, and thoughtful, each one will go in his own track: "Neither shall one thrust another: they shall walk every one in his path." (Joel ii. 8.) Having arrived at the valley, the angels will descend to separate—not between the plebeians and the patricians, not between the masters and the servants, not between the vassals and the monarchs, (these trifles cease at the end of life)—but only between the righteous and the sinners—"In that night two men shall be in the field, the one shall be taken and the other left." (S. Luke xvii. 36.) You were two knights of the same country; you were alike in the splendour of birth, but in the tenor of life very different: one was gentle and devout, the other arrogant and worldly; come away, be separated, one to live with the saints, the other with the devils—"One shall be taken and the other left." You were two merchants of the same piazza; you were alike in the profession of your employment, but unlike in the manner of carrying it on:

one charitable and just, the other fraudulent and miserly ; “ come away, be separated,” one to “ the right hand,” the other to “ the left ”—“ One shall be taken, and the other left.” You were two servants in the same house ; you were two joined together by the same marriage ; you were two monks of the same cloister ; you were alike in rank and condition, but entirely opposite in principles and in habits ; “ come away, be separated,” these to eternal rewards, and those to eternal punishments—“ One shall be taken and the other left.” Fatal separation, and inconsolable division, cried Hosea—“ Comfort is hidden from my eyes, because He shall make a separation between brothers.” (Hos. xiii. 14, 15, Vulg.) Between the Abels and the Cains, between the Ishmaels and the Isaacs, between the Esaus and the Jacobs : “ He shall make a separation between brethren.”

And now the eternal Monarch moving from on high, accompanied by all the angels, who, in order to increase the pomp of the Judge, will clothe themselves with the brightest aerial bodies—the Cross, forerunner of His coming, will be sent before : “ Then shall appear the *sign* of the Son of Man ;” at the flaming of which holy and triumphal sign, the vast valley will resound with a very loud cry : “ then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man, and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn.” (S. Matth. xxiv. 30.) Some will weep through tenderness at beholding the august “ *key of David*,” which will open for them, within a short time, the gates of Paradise ; others through wrath at seeing the resplendent sign, which at the blaze alone of its light will afflict them. Adorable cross ! painful bed, where died my JESUS, and the ark, by His will, of universal salvation ; for what will


flow my tears in that most fatal day? Shall I weep because I possess the consolation of having been nailed to thee from my tender years, by my religious vows; or shall I have to weep in great grief, for having profaned thee by my sins? And yours, dear hearers, from what fount will your tears flow at the sight of that Cross? Are you amongst the good who by It crucify their flesh and the carnal desires of their hearts? If it be so, console yourselves, because you will weep for joy. But if you should be in the roll of its enemies who make war against it by their vices, and estrange souls from it through their scandals, alas! you will be compelled to weep from incurable and profound despair.

Grief and despair, which in sinners will greatly increase, at the time when, impetuous torrents of fire raining down from the clouds, they will find themselves surrounded on every side by exterminating flames. This is that fire which the Psalmist predicted as preceding the coming of JESUS CHRIST, which will envelope the reprobates in its vortices—"A fire goeth before Him, and burneth up His enemies round about Him." (Ps. xcvi. 3.) "Enemies,"—since the just, the coming of the Supreme Judge drawing nigh, "shall be caught up to meet," lightly up from the valley, soaring in air, "to meet the LORD in the air" (1 Thess. iv. 17.) O spectacle! O spectators! Thou wilt soar up joyfully, O poor woman, to meet JESUS, thou who livest in straitened circumstances, at the distaff and spindle. Thou wilt soar up, O high-born lady, who loving little the customs of the world, findest thy delight in educating thy family holily. And thou, O woman of pleasure; and thou, O scandalous idolized one, with thy idolaters in the fire. Thou wilt soar up, O miserable ar-

tizan, who dividest thy days between piety and toil. Thou wilt soar up, O noble man, who countest honour alone to regulate thyself according to the precepts of the Gospel. And thou, O most indolent tavern-keeper; and thou, punctilious gentleman, with thy ministers in the fire. Yes, in the fire; the irate Judge, gloriously sitting upon dense clouds laden with thunder and thunderbolts, will finally appear in the great valley. Most dreadful appearing! For the wicked will then see the majesty, the grandeur, the anger, the power of the Son of Man, Who was outraged by them; "They shall look on Him Whom they have pierced." (S. John xix. 37.) "They shall look" upon that rainbow upon His head which hides from their eyes the ancient sign of peace (Rev. x. 1,) and that vesture upon the shoulders, the eternal work of justice (Rev. xix. 13,) and that shield upon His arm, impenetrable to prayers, and that sword from His lips, sharpened for the destruction of sinners. "They will see" His countenance glow, His eyes to flash, and those adorable wounds to be irritated to revenge. "They will see" the earth trembling under His steps, and the rocks to melt at His one look, and the cedars to break at the thunder of His voice. O mountains! O valleys! O caverns! O dark abysses of the infernal region! Who can hide me from His wrathful face? Can we miserable and sorrow-stricken? If ever in that day we should be thrown amongst the crowd of reprobates; then for the first time, then for the only time, we shall see unveiled our sweetest and most loving SAVIOUR: He Who loved us so much, He Who benefited us so much, He Who suffered so much for our sakes, He Whom we are accustomed to behold represented in that most pitiful attitude of a crucified man,


Who was **grieved** for us, and Who for us died. For the first time shall we see Him coming against us more fierce than a fierce lioness, and more furious than a bear, from whose den the hunter may have stolen her young. So it is, hearers; so He Himself threatens in His prophets—"Therefore I will be to them as a lion; as a leopard by the way. I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps." (Hosea xiii. 8.) Whence the hidden and fetid dregs of their sins shall be brought to light—"For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity, in the valley of vision." (Isa. xxii. 5.)

I resume the description of the valley of disclosure, "the valley of vision." Because at the face of the divine Judge, the valley will extend itself so greatly, and so great a light will make it so brilliant, that the darknesses and the mists being dissipated, it will render clear, and visible, and manifest, the most secret counsels of the human heart. It "both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart." (1 Cor. iv. 5.) It is at the coming of the night, says the Psalmist, that the wild beasts come forth from their dens, and with great ease disperse themselves where their desire impels them to wander—"Thou makest darkness, and it is night; wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth." (Ps. civ. 20.) But as soon as the sun remounts in the east, they fly in haste, they fly before the brightness of his light, and return to bury themselves in their dens—"The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens," (ver. 22.) All will happen contrariwise with us. Oh! how many sad Christians here, adds the great doctor, S. Augustine, bear hidden in the recesses of their conscience, as in so



many long and winding dens, every species of beast, that is to say, of deformed and shameless sins—"How many have lions sleeping in their souls!" During the most black and dense night of this life, these monsters remain quiet, and are buried amongst the shadows; now of a feigned zeal, then of a false ignorance, now of a profound and cunning hypocrisy—"Thou makest darkness, and it is night," and "they gather themselves together." But as soon as this sun shall appear in the valley of Jehoshaphat—the true Sun of Righteousness, CHRIST JESUS, He will compel the shameless and foul beasts to be drawn out of the darkness in which they are—"The sun ariseth:" "wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth." The life of each one according to its length will have to pass in review under this most searching and infallible light; the months, the days, the moments: our passions will also have to pass in review, and their consequences neglected by us, perchance never more considered—"Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth." The self-satisfaction which you have for yourself, O vain lady, will appear; but at the same time it will appear, that in order to please others, you violated the holy laws of modesty, that you did not omit any ornaments or cosmetics which could contribute to the beauty of your appearance: that you invented a thousand devices to hide the loathsomeness of your love, the guilty intentions that you had, the most degrading means that you used, and the profanation itself in which you held the most tremendous mysteries of the sanctuary—"All the beasts of the forest do creep forth." The allurements will appear, O man of the world, which you had for the loose conversation of our age, but it will clearly appear, that this affection extinguished in

you every spark of a pure, legitimate, and marital flame : that it kindled quarrels, rancours, and jealousies, the disturbers of family peace : that it caused you to neglect the most essential duties of your employment, which are unknown to you, only because you neglected to receive their teaching : the loss of time, the squandering away of money, the neglect of the sacraments, the scandal which these evils brought upon the servants, and upon the children badly brought up—"All the beasts of the forest do creep forth." The greediness which you have for gain will appear, O man of business : but it will appear entirely at the same time, that this thirst made you drink iniquity as water, which led you to treat lightly the gravest violations of justice, as if they were merely vain scruples, which rendered you insensible to the calamities and the miseries of the poor ; the exchanges, the monopolies, the infidelities, the usuries, the falsifications of the schedules and of the merchandise : "All the beasts of the forest do creep forth." The insane wish that you have, O ambitious man, to domineer ; but the deceits which you practised to hinder the advancement of others, will appear altogether, yes, they will appear : the calumnies which you sowed to discredit the conduct of others ; the enmities which you professed against him who wished to raise himself above you ; the flatteries to which you condescended with him who was able to advance your wishes ; the malignities, the perfidies, the emulations, the machinations, the lies !—"All the beasts of the forest do creep forth." So many lascivious intimacies which were accounted as true honest friendships ; so many cruel and implacable hatreds which were professed to be simple antipathies ; so many insidious subterfuges which were




accounted to be planned with great prudence ; so many cruel frauds which were praised as fruits of wise industry all will be revealed by the splendour of that Sun : " The sun ariseth." " Wherein all the beasts of the forest creep forth." And all these will be revealed, resumes Augustine, not to arouse us to an availing repentance, to overwhelm us with the greatest confusion—" It will be seen, not that you may repent, but that you may be confounded." (S. Aug. in Ps. xlix. 22.) It will avail nothing for you to turn yourselves to the hills and to the mountains ; it will avail nothing, to beseech them that they will fall upon you ; it will avail nothing, to pray that they will mercifully bury you under their ruins. You will have to bear the shame of your wickedness—" Bear," God will say to each one, " bear thine own shame, and mayst thou be confounded in all that thou hast done." (Ezek. : 54.) Thou, whilst thou wast living, didst not have any confusion on account of sin ; nay, by it thou didst receive such a pass as boldly to glory in it and to make a wicked boast. But I myself now awaken this confusion in thy heart : I impress it upon thy countenance : I ordain thee a punishment, a punishment of infernal fire more severe and more agonizing : " Bear thine own shame, mayst thou be confounded in all that thou hast done and now bear this confusion unveiled in the face of men, who will all stand with the most inquisitive attention concerning each other ; who will mutually behold each other with horror, with loathing.

Not only will they behold each other, but in turn they will accuse each other, and will devour each other like rabid dogs—" Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab, every one shall howl." (Isa. xvi. 7.) This woman will sa

sinned, and profaned by my life, the holiness of my nuptial couch ; but it was my husband, who abandoned me foolishly to the intriguers, whilst he coveted another woman. This artisan will say, I sinned in placing out my daughters for vile gain ; but it was that overbearing debtor who constrained me to do this by obstinately refusing me my recompense. I sinned, this child will say, I sinned at the sight of those pictures ; but it was that wretched man who painted them ; but it was my cruel father who kept them as an ornament of his rooms. I sinned whilst reading that romance ; but it was that lascivious writer who composed it ; but it was that sad companion who lent it to me. I sinned, this poor pretty little country girl will say, I sinned at the sight of those statues ; but it was that most infamous sculptor who postured them ; but it was that cruel citizen who ornamented his gardens with them. I knew no wickedness ; but it was that amorous young man who seduced me to do evil ; he taught me to sin by his looks ; he taught me to sin by the lewd jest ; he taught me to sin by sending to me little notes. Scandalous, scandalous, you do not think of it now. Hell dilates its horrid jaws on your account, and the souls redeemed with so great a price by the SAVIOUR, by thousands are lost through your means : while you perchance are contented to have your personal offences narrated to a confessor, in the meanwhile you have no care to remove your stumbling-blocks, nor to repair those injuries of which however you were the artificers and the architects. O ye, most wretched ! when you shall see a cloud of souls arise in the valley of Jehoshaphat to accuse you, to mock you, to howl vengeance : “ Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab, every one shall howl.” And what

will you answer then to these most manifest accusations? Nothing, says the Psalmist, absolutely nothing: because "All iniquity shall stop her mouth;" (Ps. cvii. 42;) nothing, resumes the wise man, absolutely nothing; because "They shall come into mind:" and as it is read more emphatically in the Greek, "They shall come into the syllogism of their sins." (Wisd. iv. 20.) The wicked will stand convicted in such a manner, that they will have nothing to answer at the evident demonstration of their crimes—"They shall come into the syllogism of their sins."

And more than this, "Their iniquities shall stand against them, to convict them," (Wisd. iv. 20)—not to excuse, not to hide their sins: they will reveal them by themselves in that most crowded theatre, and the wicked will be judged by themselves. Did you ever note a person near to parturition? She can no longer conceal herself, she can no longer dissemble. It is necessary for her to reveal herself, by violence and with cries and groans. Thus it will happen, says David, in the great valley—"Fear took hold upon them there, and pain as of a woman in travail." (Ps. xlviii. 6.) Fearful anguish, by which every soul will be forced to bring to light the mysteries of its iniquity, or to speak more truly, the mysteries of its ignominy. That dragon, beautiful in appearance, and grand, which was adored by the Babylonians as a true deity, lay fallen down from the altar, and breathless upon the pavement. When the prophet Daniel, pointing to the filthy foam that was distilled from the snout, and the unclean viscera of the disembowelled great beast, "Behold," raising his voice, he cried, "behold him whom you worshipped." (Bel 27.) Behold, O Babylonians,



that monster which you, being deluded by its appearance, venerated as a God. Those same words will resound from the lips of sinners, from whom God will finally tear away the infamous mask—"Behold him whom you worshipped." This hypocrite will exclaim, Oh, you who once admired me as being a holy man; behold me now, forced to confess my secret obscenities, my hidden practices, my brutal lewdness, my very enormous sacrileges. I was, I was much more impure than any of the most unclean animals—"Behold him whom you worshipped." He will say, who now passes for a man of honour, Oh, you who once pointed me out as the brightest mirror of honour; behold me now, obliged to bring to light my perfidies, and my robberies, and my most hidden villanies. I was, truly I was more vile than any vile ruffian. And you, O young man; and you, O young woman, who, hiding your wickedness with the outward garb of religion, usurp the title of angel and of dove, yonder I expect you in the great valley, where you will be constrained to disclose, with your profound shame, your sins. It will be one and a very different thing to open your thoughts to a confessor who, being a man like yourselves, pities your weakness, and pours the healing oil and balm upon your wounds; who, if he sometimes admonishes you, or warns you, warns you for your salvation alone, and reproves you in love. It will be another confusion, another boldness, another contempt, to repeat them in that large theatre of the great valley, with their most infamous, most vituperative, most sordid, most minute circumstances, in which they will be publicly made known—"Thine adulteries, and thy neighborings, the lewdness of thy whoredom." (Jer. xiii. 27.) O sinners! why do you not here at the present time submit

yourselves to this confusion, as Ecclesiasticus called it, so that you may gloriously manifest yourselves at the tribunal of JESUS the SAVIOUR? "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of CHRIST." (2 Cor. v. 10.) Either here in the churches, at the confessional the tribunal of mercy; or there, in the valley at the tribunal of justice, to receive condemnation. There are no other tribunals of CHRIST; you are compelled to fly either to the one or to the other: "We must all appear." Do I desire otherwise by you, than only to spare you the intolerable shame of that great day? Yes, O hearers, I desire something more; I desire besides—I desire to free you from the most fearful destruction which GOD will make finally of His enemies, "in the valley of concision."

SECOND PART.

It is impossible, O my beloved, that a truth so terrible and so immoveable, although explained by me so rudely, should not have made some strong impression upon your heart. Felix, the governor of Judea, was wanting in faith, and from the courage of his Latin ancestry was proud and cruel: "Felix trembled." (Acts xxiv. 25.) However, on listening to this same judgment which was described to him by the apostle Paul, such fear seized him, that his veins answering him through the beating of his heart, he hardly found a word by which to frame an answer.

Therefore with reason it is to be wished that in you, O Christians, fear might be more lively and more operative, and the resolution more fixed, of using every means to escape so great a ruin, in that day. If it be so, hearers,

"I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of CHRIST." (2 Cor. x. 1.) Ah, do not desire in parting from church to drive from your soul that salutary dread ; a precious gift of the HOLY SPIRIT—"Quench not the Spirit." (1 Thess. v. 19.) Hold ye it because it is good ; foment it, preserve it, second its promptings ; so that in that day you may be worthy to share in the benedictions which will bountifully descend upon the just, to whom JESUS mercifully turning His face will say : My friends and My loved brethren, I render you thanks for having done so much good to Me whilst you were living. Mine were those bodies which you honoured in yourselves, and clothed in others ; to Me you gave those charities ; to Me you proffered those good counsels ; it was Myself Whom you consoled in those afflictions ; it was Myself Whom you visited lying in the hospitals ; it was Myself Whom you visited when abandoned, and shut up in the prisons : "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." (S. Matth. xxv. 40.) I do not blush, no, not before heaven and earth to acknowledge Myself to be your debtor : "Ye have done it unto Me." I rejoice at being born a mendicant ; I rejoice at having led a meagre life ; I rejoice at having shed My blood to cleanse with it a people so acceptable to Me, a race so holy, a heritage so precious, as you are to Me. If it were necessary for me to plough again that vast sea of trouble on which I journeyed and was shipwrecked, I would cast Myself willingly into the sea again for the sake of your love. But since that is neither needful nor necessary, come with Me, blessed souls, to eternal triumph. The sweetest FATHER, both Mine and yours, awaits us in heaven. I have there a kingdom flourishing with every de-

light; but without you My joy and My crown would fail Me in it: for ye are "My joy and crown." (Philip. iv. 1.) When living you were partakers of My tribulations, come now to be partakers of My glory: "Come, ye blessed of My FATHER, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." (S. Matth. xxv. 34.)

Wait however, for I desire under your very eyes to take vengeance upon your own and My common adversaries. These offended Me; they insulted you, and insulted Me; they oppressed you, and these rash adversaries attempted even to oppress Me. I dissimulated for a long time on account of those high ends of which you now know. You bore patiently, and committed to Me the avenging of your offences—"Vengeance is Mine." (Rom. xii. 19.) Behold and mark whether I know how to take it. Ho there! O wicked, what are you doing? To the fire, to the fire with you. I called you so many times to My arms, and like stolid wandering sheep, I often invited you from the precipice to the fold: "I have called, . . . I have stretched out My hand." (Prov. i. 24.) I caused to be proclaimed to you through the mouth of My ministers, that those wanton tricks were snares where, in the end, you would remain bound: that the confirming yourself so long in sin; that the turning so readily from penitence to sin; that the manner of living so listless, and so loathsome to every practice of piety, led to the evident danger of your being lost; and this I caused to be told to you. You did not believe it; and you wished to follow the customs of your world rather than My laws; and you wished rather to be servants of the devil than of Me. Depart therefore, cursed souls, for I give you over to him: "Depart from Me, ye cursed." (S. Matth. xxv. 41.) Depart ye,

from My presence, for I hate you : depart ye, for I abominate you : depart ye, for I abandon you : "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." I did not make hell for you, I made it for Lucifer and for the rebellious angels : "Prepared for the devil and his angels." (Ib.) And for you I had prepared an eternal kingdom, where I willed you to be My companions, and My co-heirs. For this end I had called into being, the heavens, the elements, and the stars. For this I had clothed Myself with your body, and I died nailed upon that cross. And loved you, rather, to be co-heirs with, and companions of the devil? In scorn of My great work and passion did you wish for condemnation? Go therefore, ye cursed, for I condemn you : "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

At such a most just, eternal, unappealable sentence, awakening a mighty joy in the heart of the righteous, they on beholding their enemies and the enemies of their God now exterminated ;—all in concert will cry aloud, "depart, cursed, depart ye :"—and the vast valley itself even, echoing on all sides will answer in concert, "depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire:" when the whole earth opening itself in a vast abyss, and down through it the demons and the wicked confusedly rolling, "these shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal;" (S. Matth. xxv. 46;) the wicked, bemoaning, will rush down headlong into hell ; the righteous singing hymns, will draw nigh to glory, in order that they may never see the wicked any more for ever and ever.

My most beloved Christians, how many of you will in that tremendous day, become exterminated by that terri-

ble "Depart ye," as by a slaying thunderbolt? How many? And who will be these miserable ones? You are silent; and if any one should answer me from his inmost soul, he would answer that he did not know. But I know him. It is you, O lascivious man! if you refuse to break that wanton habit: it is you, O usurper! if you refuse to restore that unlawful possession; it is you, O punctilious one! if you refuse to pardon that injury; it is you, O offender! if you refuse to render that satisfaction; it is you, O backslider! if you refuse to put a bridle upon your sins; it is you, O worldling, if you refuse to moderate that luxury, to cease from that play, and to put an end at once to that disordered manner of living. Do you not this morning wish to obey CHRIST, Who like a father calls you to His arms, and Who points out to you safety in His bosom? No? Depart, therefore, for I, the minister of this Judge, receiving His words from His mouth, from this time, I tell you "Depart ye, &c." Ah! no, my beloved, for I am not come this morning to condemn any one, but with a most lively desire to save all. I do not speak to you, dearly beloved; I speak to sinners. "Depart ye, into everlasting fire." May these sinful curses, and every sinful affection, and every occasion of sin, be far from the mind of these, my hearers: may the hatreds and sinful loves be afar away: may haughty power and fraud be far removed: may the wasting of time and the fatal neglect of proper prayer be far off: "Depart, ye cursed, depart into everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil." And you, my beloved hearers, "Come ye, all;" "come ye, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Amen.

VI.

SANCTIFYING GRACE.

"All the city was moved, saying, Who is this?"—S. Matth. xxi. 10.

ADAM was placed—or to speak more truly, a lump of vile clay, of which the LORD designed to form Adam—I repeat he was placed in the field of Damascus, deprived not only of understanding, but even of sense, and therefore, of less account than those very animals which perhaps were rambling playfully around him. Then God turning Himself to that imperfect work, drew from His living heart a quickening breath, and breathed into his face: "He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." (Gen. ii. 7.) At the virtue of that breath, that muddy material soon revived, and to use the expression of Tertullian, by that most flashing flame, all that was there, of the sordid and the earthly, was immediately devoured: "The clay was absorbed into flesh to glow with its fitting heat," (Tertul. De Res.) and of a senseless statue was formed a living man: the work the most excellent among corporeal beings, the king of the earth, the ruler of the animals: he, who, according to the saying of S. Chrysostom, is the being, made after the image of God Himself:

“Man was made a living soul He made him after the image of GOD.” (S. Chrys. viii. Hom. in Gen.) This marvel once only wrought by a creative GOD, is frequently renewed in our days by a justifying GOD. And it is as often renewed, my faithful brethren, as infants are brought to Baptism, or as adults, contrite for their sins, approach to confession. For remember what man really is before GOD revives him with His grace: “Who is this, who is he? He is nothing truly, except a work of dust; save even more impure than the dust through sin: “For his heart is ashes his life more base than clay.” (Wisd. xv. 10.) But as soon as GOD has transfused into the soul a portion of Himself, as sanctifying grace was called by the holy apostle Peter, “the clay is absorbed into GOD,” and of a creature so wretched by origin, an image is made, like the substantial Image, which is the Word, Who is the most expressive image of the being and of the perfections of GOD: “The clay is absorbed into GOD to glow with fitting warmth.” Honour me, hearers, with your kind attention, whilst I am explaining to you this morning in detail, the great value of a *justified soul*; I will endeavour to explain to you those words, by all used, but by few understood: viz. a man in the grace of GOD. Let us begin.

It is not, hearers, that I do not know full well, the arduous and difficult subject of my sermon, having to speak of things quite removed from the senses, and which neither our thoughts, nor our sight can reach. Moreover, if I could show you a just man in his true guise, what doubt is there but that, as formerly the great S. Dionysius was confounded by the sight of the Virgin Mary, so even you, bewildered at the most shining unaccustomed light, would


be in doubt whether or not to throw yourselves at his feet, and to adore him as GOD. It would never come into the mind to compare majesty so perfect, either to the grandeur of princes, or to the splendour of monarchs; neither to anything that is the most pompous and the most magnificent to be seen on earth; because, "All the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared unto" Him. (Prov. iii. 15.) Such an one, moreover, may be of low and plebeian birth; he may be poor in fortune, he may be of slender income; he may be coarse, infirm, degraded; he may be unknown and despised by men. If he lives in the grace of GOD, he is happy and fortunate beyond all belief. He has no cause to envy the nobles their descent; nor the wealthy their riches; nor the learned their sciences; nor the kings themselves, their crowns. Do you know what all these, and nearly every one in the world, are in the sight of GOD, Who is the most righteous Judge of all things? that which by chance they appear to men, lovers of vanity? Certainly not. They are, says Isaiah, as a drop of water compared to the sea, or a grain of dust to the world: "As a drop of a bucket . . . as the small dust of the balance." (Isa. xl. 15.) Whilst a righteous man, not only is something, but he is something great; and who, compared even with GOD Himself, may be called great: "He shall be great in the sight of the LORD." (S. Luke i. 15.)

GOD was sitting one day—for so Holy Scripture adapting itself to our capacity, endeavours to explain to us the inexplicable manner of the Divine operation:—GOD was sitting upon His starry throne, and the angelic host was compassing Him round about, ready upon the wing, and obedient to His sign. In the midst of this august assem-

bly, the devil truly had the boldness to intrude himself ; to whom GOD, putting on an air of sovereign majesty, turned and said, From whence comest thou ? I come, replied the sad one, I come, LORD, from the earth which in a short time I have traversed from shore to shore : "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." (Job i. 7.) And hast thou considered well My servant Job ? "Hast thou considered My servant Job ?" (ver. 8.) But softly a little. And is nothing asked of so many and so proud monarchies, of the Chaldeans, of the Assyrians, of the Arabians, of the Egyptians ; of so many capitals so haughty ; of so many nations so warlike ; of so many people so fierce ; of so many princes so powerful, of their courts, of their wars, and of their conquests ? You think that supreme, self-existent and infinite LORD of all, values such things as these. He beholds the kings of the earth, and their movements, the armies, and the victories, as a mass of very small worms, who through the desire of dominion, devour one another, until death smites them, and resolves them into dust : "All nations before Him are as nothing." (Isa. xl. 17.) GOD cares for Job, He esteems, He asks concerning Job, "Hast thou considered," not the honour of the purple, not the brightness of the gold, not the multitude of the flocks, not the largeness of the dwellings ? No, no. But his uprightness, his innocence, his holiness ; that he was a man, "simple and upright, and fearing GOD." (Job i. 8, Vulg.) Blessed angels who from heaven fly down to earth day by day, and who all, timid and reverent, present yourselves before the divine throne, whom He delights to converse with ; tell us, we pray you, who are those of whom, from you, the Eternal GOD asks the knowledge ?

Perchance of that beggar, who drags out his life with difficulty along the great high way; of that decrepit one, who lies abandoned upon that couch; of that shepherd, who lives a solitary life upon those crags; of that woman, who retiring from fashionable life, attends solely to the duties of her own station, yet neglected and unknown by the blind world, who sees no other greatness, than that of pomp and luxury; but who are great before GOD, Who cares for no other greatness than righteousness: "For he shall be great in the sight of the LORD." (S. Luke i. 15.)

And such will not only be great, but dear to Him, and loved by Him; and loved ardently too, as being His friends. This, O hearers! is as certain and as true as are the words of JESUS CHRIST, Who spake to His disciples, and through them to every righteous man; and Who gave to them, as a great honour, the sacred title of His friends: "Ye are My friends." (S. John xv. 14.) Oh, most profound significance, and reverent mysteries of our faith! Wherefore hearken ye. The greatest doctor of the Church teaches us that true friendship cannot exist, unless between those amongst whom there is some equality; and in this statement he teaches a truth of moral philosophy: "Friendship either receives us as, or makes us, equals." On which account Alexander, that renowned son of the illustrious Antiochus, desirous of binding himself in friendship with the most valiant Jonathan Maccabæus, "sent him a purple robe and a crown of gold," (1 Mac. x. 20;) sent to him as a gift, his jewelled crown of gold, and his regal mantle of purple, exalting him in such a manner, as far as it was in his power, to a dignity equal with that of kings: "that he might be called the friend of the king:



and he sent him a purple robe and a crown of gold." But what equality, come tell me, what equality can be given between man and GOD, by which true friendship can pass between them? Not any, certainly not any; before GOD "sends to him a golden crown and a purple robe," which crown can very justly be called sanctifying grace; as much for its own worthiness, as for the finest gold of charity to which it is united. The robe may be called purple, because dyed in the blood of JESUS CHRIST: "A golden crown and a purple robe." When the soul is set off and adorned with these sacred devices, she quickly changes her condition, and not alone esoterically in the opinion of man, as perhaps did Jonathan Maccabæus; but she is outwardly transformed, and mounts up on high; and there she places herself, in a rank which is truly divine. Then GOD, beholding the soul so beautiful, so majestic, so grand, and so proportioned to His infinite Being, delights in her; and deeming her worthy of His love, He cherishes her as His friend, and presses her to His bosom; and as a friend, He calls her by the sweetest names—of His beloved, of His dove, of His sister: "My love, My dove, My beautiful one." (Cant. ii. 10, Vulg.)

Therefore it being an unchangeable law of friendship, the wishing for our friend that good which we ourselves desire, and the conversing with him with pleasure, and the living with him gladly; behold, oh just ones; behold how perfectly GOD fulfils both these laws, and go on your way joyful and proud of your lot. Firstly, not only does He live and converse with you, but in you He really dwells; and He sojourns in you as in His sweetest hostel: "as if in a familiar dwelling," says the Angelic Doctor; even as in His august palace, and in His sanctified temple.

Yes, you, oh just ones, (so S. Paul cries, surprised with unwonted astonishment) you, O just ones, are the temple of God, (2 Cor. vi. 16) and elsewhere: "Your members are the temple of the HOLY SPIRIT," (1 Cor. vi. 19;) and again: "Do not ye know that ye are the temple of God, and that GOD dwells in you?" (1 Cor. iii. 16.) And He dwells in you in such a way, that even when He might not be necessitated by His immensity to be in every place, He would be necessitated by His friendship to be in your soul. To speak more plainly: it is His essential perfection that determines His presence in other places; whereas your perfection itself determines His sojourning in your souls. Wherefore in that manner that the Hypostatic Union will give for ever to the soul of JESUS CHRIST a true and inexplicable right of having there GOD as an indweller; so the sanctifying grace will be ever in you, a true and inexplicable right of having for a guest the same GOD. Listen to CHRIST Himself, Who reveals it to you: "If a man love Me . . . We will come unto him and make our abode with him." (S. John xiv. 23.) "We will come;" mark well, O just ones, it is the perfect, the most august Trinity that descends into you: "We will make our abode with him." Consider, O ye just, it is the perfect, the most august Trinity that dwells in you. Whatever indeed your hostel may be, either sumptuous and splendid, or poor and uncomfortable; whatever you yourself may be, whether clothed in golden raiment, or covered with the vilest rags, it is no concern to these Divine Persons. A just soul is sufficiently worthy for their reception, on which account they tarry there with pleasure, and abide there in peace: "The tabernacles of GOD are the souls of the just," as S. Gregory the Great grace-

fully expresses it. These are the tents and the royal pavilions in which GOD reposes from the strife which the wicked raise against Him everywhere: "The tents of GOD are these same hearts of the righteous, in which, as if on a journey, He is protected while He rests."

In regard to the other law of friendship, which compels us to wish for our friend that same good that we wish for ourselves; mark whether GOD observes it also. The happiness in which He rejoices, and beautifies Himself, consists in His being removed from every doubt, and in His knowing Himself perfectly, and in loving Himself tranquilly. This is the perfect beatitude of GOD; other than this it is not, neither can it be. But does He wish for you, O just ones, a happiness less great than His own? Nothing less, says the Angelic Doctor, nothing less: "The good that He desires for Himself, that is, the vision and fruition of Himself, He wishes also for the elect." He desires, that you may reign at the fitting time in that same palace, where He is reigning now. He wishes, that you may sit at that same table where He is sitting now. He wishes, that you may drink at that same fount itself, where He is drinking in fruition, joy, delight, and happiness: "The good that He wishes for Himself... He wishes also for the elect." And He wishes it with a will, such as belongs to Himself alone—an absolute will—with a will solicitous and active, giving all the aids which are necessary to the obtaining of so great a good. "Oh, how great" (it now appears to me the time to exclaim with S. Gregory the Great) "oh, how great a dignity is it of men, that they are the friends of GOD." Where art thou, where art thou, happy man! for I, the most vile servant, and unworthy minister, would like to

know by sight a friend of my LORD, and to kiss thy rags if thou art poor, and to lick thy wounds if thou art wounded : for although thou art wounded and poor, thou art a person truly great, upon whom GOD wishes to bestow His happiness : "The good that He wishes for Himself . . . He wishes also for His elect."

But the friendship of GOD is not the highest rank, to which a soul is raised by sanctifying grace. There is another, much more sublime; it is pointed out to us as being in the midst of eternal light by the most penetrating glance of S. John : a rank so luminous, that in discovering it, the holy man remained in such a manner entranced, that he exclaimed, after the manner of one who is amazed, "Behold what manner of love the FATHER hath bestowed upon us." (1 S. John iii. 1.) Behold the immense and incomprehensible benignity of that supreme FATHER of mercies ! Behold the gift ! "That we should be called the sons of GOD," that a poor miserable creature, that a despicable man, should be called a son of GOD ; and not only is he called, but he is really a son of GOD : "That we should be called the sons of GOD . . . now are we the sons of GOD." It is so, hearers, verily it is so. When you are in grace, you are in the strictest sense sons of GOD ; and this not by nature, because the FATHER cannot have any other natural Son save the WORD : but you are divinely adopted by Him, to be His own son : "Ye have received," for S. Paul assures you of it, "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption . . . that we are the children of GOD." (Rom. viii. 15, 16.) All the legal ceremonies, and all the authorized forms, by which upon earth any lord or prince adopts a person who is a stranger to him for his son, all end in a pure and most simple external relationship; by

which he who is adopted does not become more wise, nor more magnanimous, nor more disposed to work honourably. The Angelic Doctor says that: "Man does not make him whom he adopts, meet to be adopted." But it is not so in the adoption which is made by GOD. This is truly an adoption, which is intrinsic and interior; by the power of which, the soul is born again and lives a new life. The soul was at the first earthly, and afterwards it becomes heavenly; it was weak, and it becomes strong; it was unjust, and it becomes holy; it was wretched, miserable, blind, poor, naked, and it becomes quickly wise, happy, rich, and adorned in the inner man. Wherefore such an adoption is very like a true natural generation; which is what it was exactly called by the apostle S. Peter; and by S. Cyprian, a "second birth;" and by S. Dionysius, a "divine birth." Wherefore the just, inasmuch as they are thus, "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD." (S. John i 13.) Wherefore by the royal Psalmist, illumined to understand the excellency, they are truly honoured with the title of Gods: "I have said, ye are Gods; and all of you are children of the Most High." (Ps. lxxxii. 6.) Wherefore they are called by S. Paul, brethren of JESUS CHRIST; and even by CHRIST Himself, they are called by the title of His brethren, (S. Matth. xxviii. 10.) Since that same divine essence, which the FATHER eternally communicated to the Eternal Word, that same divine essence may be communicated to the righteous; to Him by origin, to these by adoption; to Him necessarily, to these of free will; to Him by identity of nature, to these by a true and intimate union: "He who is adopted into the Sonship of GOD," says S. Thomas Aquinas, "is likened unto

a true son, through a participation in His glory;" so S. Peter the apostle had before expressed the same thing; and he had learned it immediately from CHRIST Himself; "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." (2 S. Peter i. 4.) Ye nobles, and those of gentle blood who are here listening to me; I acknowledge that I profoundly respect that rank in which God has placed you, that I venerate that most glorious blood which flowed from an exalted fount, and which, having descended through the course of so many ages, has lived down to you pure and untainted. But ah! I beseech and conjure you, at least by the light which your pedigrees throw, learn to-day, learn how much you ought to esteem the nobility of the brethren of JESUS CHRIST. Poor and ignoble, who are listening to me, I am now no longer able to despise your birth, nor undervalue the misery of your lot, since I see that GOD has exalted you to the grandeur of His children: "Which were born . . . of GOD."

All the works of the LORD are perfect, and every nature, let it be what it may, demands, on account of its perfection, to have complete power, by which it can use perfectly whatever is agreeable to that nature. And this we see in the beasts which are endowed with instinct, to enable them to perform their proper work; and we see it in men likewise, who being moreover rational, are adapted to reason and to will. So also it is that GOD gives freely to His adopted children, and infuses into them all the faculties which are necessary, that He may work conformably to the new divine being which He has given to them: to work that which is holy, and beyond the power of

nature to do and to perform that which is heavenly and deserving of glory and of eternal life. These are the habits of theological as well as of the moral virtues : they form a certain treasure, a treasure of inestimable value, which cannot be drawn from any source save the treasury of an infinite GOD : oh ! it is a beautiful thing to see a soul a child of GOD, in which dwells, as a queen upon the throne, that charity which gives it strength, and by which it can love its dear FATHER with a most perfect love. To see then, hope, faith, and religion, forming around charity a most choice crown, and with them the whole army of those graces which were indeed justly called by S. Gregory Nazianzen, “ the handmaids of charity ; ”—is verily a different spectacle indeed, from beholding Solomon sitting upon his throne adorned with all the splendour of his glory : “ Behold, a greater than Solomon is here.” (S. Matth. xii. 42.) Imagine, hearers, whether an earthly king could ever adumbrate the inward retinue of a righteous man, to whom GOD may have assigned the attendance, an attendance suitable to the grade of His SON : “ A greater than Solomon is here ; ” “ A greater than Solomon.” I do not believe that greater retinue can be seen, except in heaven where the FATHER Himself by His infinite attributes is Himself infinite ; “ Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto,” (1 Tim. vi. 16,) and where the blessed elect souls, and the blessed hierarchies, make for Him a crown.

What shall we say then, of the care which GOD takes of these, His dearly beloved children, that they may become instructed in the divine mysteries ? Picture to yourselves, O hearers, for a moment, the Egyptian Princess. She found, you know, on the banks of the river Nile, the little

child Moses, abandoned, through a harsh law, to the mercy of the current. Through her native gentleness she took pleasure in that innocent baby; in nothing guilty, save in the being an offspring of a hated race. She bade him immediately be lifted from the ground, and taking more and more pleasure in him, and loving him more and more, she thus adopted him for her son; "And she adopted him for a son." (Exod. ii. 10, Vulg.) Then delivering him to the natural mother herself of the little child, and consigning him to her hands, Take (she said lovingly to her) this baby; suckle it for me—nourish it for me; and ever remember that he is my child: "Take this child away and nurse it for me," (ver. 9.) Every child of man, since he is the offspring of a sinful race, and a child of wrath, in his first birth remains abandoned to death, and subject to the law of condemnation. But the divine compassion finds pleasure in you, O righteous, who now are hearing me; and from the horrible odour of your ordinary filth, He is raising you, who are both naked and poor, in order to place you among the princes of His palace; He is purging you in the holy baptismal waters, beautifying you through grace, and adopting you for His son: "And He adopts thee for a son." Therefore to all created things, as to so many nurses, He is consigning you; and to each one He commands imperiously, "Take this child away, and nurse it for Me." Thou, O sun, shalt illumine him with thy rays, and remember always that thou art illumining My son. You, O stars, assist him with your influences, and remember always that you are assisting My son. Thou, O earth, nourish him with thy fruits, and remember always that thou art nourishing My son. So He commands to the

plants, so to the breezes, so to the heavens, so to the elements; all of which things are formed for service, and chiefly for the service of His children. "Nurse it Me," He commands to the angels, the mighty princes of His court, "nurse," by helping him, by defending him, by directing him, by guarding him. "Nurse him Me," He commands to His dear spouse the Church, "nurse," by evangelical preaching, with Christian doctrine, by reminding him of the examples of so many saints who are his true and honourable ancestors; from whom he learns the proper habits and thoughts worthy of being. And to the end that he may grow, and be fatter and be strengthened, suckle him with My own Blood, which I have left with you in the Sacraments; feed him with My own Flesh, which I have placed in the hands of the priests to that end alone, in order that it may serve as pasture exclusively for My children: "as if it were a ritual food by which the living are nourished." The righteous, yes, the righteous alone, are quickened by grace. Oh love! Oh guardianship! Oh solicitude!

But why marvel? For the righteous are not only so but even hereditary princes, possessing the true and sacred right of entering one day upon the possession of a kingdom: "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God" (Rom. viii. 17.) An inheritance oh how rich! since it is the same inheritance of which the First-begotten, JESUS CHRIST, is heir: "Co-heirs with CHRIST." An inheritance, oh how lasting! since it is infinite in its duration, "Their inheritance shall be for ever." (Ps. xxxvii. 1) An inheritance, oh how certain! since if you do not yield it up of your own free will, no one can take it away from you, nor waste it, nor unsettle your possession of it.

any litigation : " And your joy no man taketh from you." (S. John xvi. 22.) Truly of great dominion and great right did David boast, when boasting of the greatness of his kingdom : Mine, he said, mine are the plains of Gilead, mine the possession of Manasseh, mine the crown of Ephraim ; and the sceptre of Judea belongs to me as to its legitimate father : " Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine ; Ephraim also is mine head ; Judah is my law-giver." (Ps. lx. 7.) Oh, poor riches of that monarch, when compared to those which belong by inheritance to a righteous man ! Mine, he can call these with truth, mine is that heavenly Sion, of which the foundation is gold and precious stones ; mine, is the beatitude of all the angels, and of all the saints ; mine, is the omnipotence ; mine, is the knowledge ; mine, is the goodness ; mine, is all the perfection, and the essence of GOD Himself : " The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance." (Ps. xvi. 5.) Such and so manifold, O hearers are those privileges with which a soul that is adorned with grace, remains invested. Therefore it is that sanctifying grace is called by theologians, " the seed of glory," since the glory of Paradise is necessarily the fruit of its nature. Therefore it is that it is called by the Scriptures, " the seed of GOD," since the eternal possession of GOD is the fruit of its nature : " Heirs of GOD."

Now where are those who, having lost this " seed of GOD " through their sin, and choked it, continue nevertheless to pass their days joyfully, and to trifle with the wicked : " I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me?" (Ecclus. v. 4.) Alas, senseless Christians, for the things which you call evil ! Is it a conflagration which burns your house ? Is it a hailstorm that may destroy

your farms? Is it a lawsuit that may devour your substance? Is it an illness that may make you feel the burden of the many and long continued irregularities of your manner of living? These, however, may be evils, they are evils. What an evil therefore will it not be, and how great, and how pitiable; for one transitory brutal delight, for a miserable gain of a few small coins, for one venting of anger and vengeance, to have lost holiness, justness, rectitude; to have lost the friendship of GOD, the familiarity of GOD, the benevolence of GOD; to have lost the sonship of GOD, the brotherhood of JESUS CHRIST, and every true right to the eternal kingdom! Adventurous soul! over thee it is now time to renew the most doleful wailings of Jeremiah, and with a countenance astonished with bewilderment, to cry weeping, How is it that this soul lies so emptied and so desolate which was once so great, so overflowing, and so filled with divine and sovereign gifts? How is it that this royal princess, once destined to the empire of Paradise, has become the degraded drudge of a most vile passion? How did that gold, once so bright, so shining with charity, become dim? Where are those most beautiful infused virtues departed to, which were once the regal ornament of this soul? Those ways of friendly communication and intercourse by which personally JESUS CHRIST descended to visit the soul and feed it upon Himself, cry in distress, being broken up.

Sin, like a proud and avaricious enemy, has indeed entered into her; and "it hath cast away all her precious things," and it has squandered all the most holy and precious things, and it has profaned that honourable sanctuary, and it has plundered and burnt that living temple of the living GOD. The inhabitants of heaven who beheld

the soul at first as an object of honour and of reverence, now loathe and despise her shame : " All that honoured her, despise her, because they have seen her nakedness." (Lam. i. 8.) Ah! dearly beloved sinner, now awaken thyself from thy lethargy, and remember " All thy pleasant things which thou hadst in the days of old, when thou didst fall into the hand of the enemy," (ver. 7 :) remember thy ancient grandeur and thy present impurity ; remember thy ancient wealth, and thy present extreme misery : " return," (S. Augustine with me so intreats thee) " return to thy conscience, and shall you find therein thy soul being healed ?" A beggar, thou wilt find thy soul degraded, debased, and lying in bonds But what am I doing ? To whom am I speaking ? For you alone, O righteous, I reason, and of you alone I speak. Wherefore wait, and after a short time I will address you.

SECOND PART.

It is proper that a man who changes his station in life, should also change his notions and his ideas : and so we find that Saul, in his private capacity of a poor shepherd, did not conceive of anything higher than of the asses of his father ; nor did he attend to anything else than to the care of oxen. But when he was elected by God, and anointed by Samuel to be the monarch of the holy people, he immediately expelled from his mind every rural habit ; and girding his heart with sublime and regal cares, he devoted himself at once to the drawing up of laws, to the marshalling of armies, to the subduing of nations, to the subjecting of provinces : nor did he any more, so far as it is known, lower his mind so as to think of his herd that

had strayed ; neither ever more did he extend his hand to guide his abandoned plough. It would have been an unseemly sight to see Saul with his head decked with a flashing diadem, and his shoulders clad with regal purple, to climb hills, to ford streams, to sweat, to wear himself out, and to fatigue himself. And for what reason ? For the seeking after the asses which had strayed, (1 Sam. ix. 3.) Now imagine another spectacle by far more incongruous if not in the eyes of others certainly to the eyes of the angels, it is indeed, to behold a righteous man raised by GOD to the honour of sonship, and consecrated to be a brother of JESUS CHRIST ; to behold him, I say, lost by following the track of these earthly and transitory goods ; to behold him, with his head sprinkled with earth, and his heart filled with earthly affections alone ; wearing himself away all day long for miserable gain, and rejoiced on account of a childish feast, being occupied in games, in banquets, in entertainments ; without ever revolving in his mind a thought worthy of a child of GOD, of an hereditary prince of Paradise. Behold that most strange wonder, which is renewed in our day, and over which the Prophet wept so bitterly in his time : “ The precious sons of Sion . . . that were brought up in scarlet, embrace dunghills.” (Lam. iv. 2, 5.) The children of the holy Sion adorned with the pure gold of sanctifying grace : mark how they are lost ; how they are bewitched, in building for themselves in the dust, thatched caves after the manner of sordid rustics. “ What doest thou here,” (said the LORD to Elijah, who was gone to hide himself in the desert) “ What doest thou here, Elijah ?” (1 Kings xix. 9.) I have elected thee for My minister, I have infused a noble spirit into thee, by which to strike terror

into the proud Ahabs and the brazen-faced Jezebels who are upon the throne ; I have given into thy hand the keys by which to open and to shut heaven according to thy pleasure ; all My people look for miracles from thee ; and art thou basely, idly, tarrying among these woods ? Out upon thee, arouse thyself ; and if thou art a prophet, do the work of a prophet : "What doest thou here ? . . . go, return on thy way," (ver. 15.) O justified soul, chosen by GOD for things great and marvellous : "What doest thou here ?" What doest thou here, idly from morning to evening in those piazzas, in those parties, in those wakes ? Go for once ; rouse yourself, go ; and spend at least some time conversing with GOD your FATHER in prayer. Go every day to visit thy First-begotten brother, Who in the churches dwells bodily. Go to increase thy capital of grace and thy celestial inheritance with thy holy works. Consider attentively whether the paths in which thou art walking are worthy of thy profession, and whether thy manners correspond with thy divine nobility ; and if this should not be the case, "return on thy way," the way of faith, the way of fervour, the way of Evangelical diligence.

And verily every just man ought always to have at hand that answer which the Redeemer once gave to His sorrowing mother ; that answer which she had, you know, after three days of careful and anxious seeking, when she had at last found Him in the temple at Jerusalem, and venting upon Him her inward anxiety : Why, O Son, said she, didst Thou withdraw Thyself from my companionship, and leave me so sad and broken-hearted ? "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us ?" (S. Luke ii. 48.) Then CHRIST, assuming a majestic look and carriage : Where-

fore, He answered, do ye seek Me among the crowds of men, and in the streets and houses of Jerusalem? Albeit, do ye not know that I am the SON of GOD; and that I must order Myself entirely to do glorious actions for GOD? "How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My FATHER's business?" (ver. 49.) So you too, O righteous, ought to say to those who are amazed, and who lament with you that they do not find you more frequently,—I say more frequently, because a good and moderate and lawful recreation is not forbidden to any just man, since we see that the Redeemer Himself was accustomed to bid the Apostles from time to time to take some little relaxation and repose: "Come ye yourselves apart . . . and rest a while" (S. Mark vi. 31)—that they do not find you more frequently in those haunts of amusement, in those merry meetings, in those genial parties, in those festive and immoderate recreations: do you not know that these are neither places nor occupations which are becoming to one like myself? Do you not know that my thoughts ought to be of a different kind, and also my habits; since both my state and my condition are different from yours? "Wist ye not that I must be about My FATHER's business:" in His temples, in His oratories, nigh to His tabernacles, in the works for His worship, His glory: "that I must be about My FATHER's business?" But oh! how very few are those just ones, who nourish in their hearts such high solitudes. How many on the contrary are those who, despising their divine privileges, expose themselves all day to the danger of being deprived of them: and while they strengthen the locks of their coffers to guard their temporal riches from robbers, foolishly expose the treasure of sanctifying grace

thefts of ghostly thieves! What would the most Paul say? what would he say indeed? He who the whole world boldly, neither fearing troubles, persecutions, nor tyrants, nor executioners; he who ready to shed his blood, and to give up his life for salvation of grace and love: Oh! holy Apostle of gentiles, interpenetrate us this morning with a true love of the holy grace of GOD, so that "neither death, nor . . . nor things present, nor things to come, . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of GOD." (Rom. viii. 38, 39.) Amen.

VII.

THE DUTY OF AVOIDING THE BEGINNING OF SIN.

"And the last state of that man is worse than the first."—S.
Matth. xii. 45.

IF ever there was a city upon earth which GOD showed that He loved with a most fervent love, it was without doubt the city of Jerusalem. He had founded it as with His own hand on the summit of the delightful Sion: "And the Highest Himself shall establish her." (Ps. lxxxvii. 5.) He had in it His temple, as if for a royal palace; in it He had established His altar, as if for a throne; and He had placed His own providence there, as a guard over it. He was wont to call it by the sweet name of His spouse, of His friend, of His daughter; and He willed that it should be upon earth, the living image of that blessed abode, where, amidst the holy angels, and amidst the glorified souls, His majesty eternally shines forth in all its pomp. However it was not long, before it became so grievous to its Divine lover, that He Himself raising up the Roman army, excited it to take vengeance upon it, to bring desolation and destruction there: "Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy her." (Jer. v. 10.) He

allowed its walls to be demolished, He allowed its temple to be consumed, He allowed its sanctuary to be profaned, and He willed, that from a reigning city, it should become a subject city ;—that from a city, a spouse, and a queen, it should be transformed into a city, a widow, and a tributary. But what was then the sad source of so many woes for Jerusalem thus miserable ? Behold it clearly, my hearers. The profane city began to persecute the innocent ; it passed on to betray the high priests, thence to stone the prophets ; whilst the perfidy of its fury not resting here, it arrived at length to defile itself with the murder of a SAVIOUR ; and this was the cause, near and immediate, of its total and eternal extermination. Ah ! unfortunate city of GOD ; a symbol however, all too expressive of innumerable souls who, blindly advancing upon the path of sin, and continually being entangled within it, do not stay their course, until they are smitten to the very dreadful gate of hell itself.

“The last state of them is worse than the first.” You now see, O Christians, what is to be the subject of my sermon, and what a terrible, though useful truth, I take upon myself to explain to you. I take courage from the fact, that when any one has set out upon the road of sin, must be accounted a great marvel if he ever stops upon his course ; or if he will, for anything that we can say, reflect upon the nature of sin, or be inclined to consider the conduct that obliges GOD to punish the sinner. As the risk is common, so must the precautions to guard against it be also general ones.

Writers observe, that monsters are usually barren, not without the wise design of nature, otherwise the world would become a hospital for ill-formed men. Sin alone, my beloved, a monster, of all the others the most

horrible and the most raging, unites in itself that most pernicious property of being beyond measure wonderfully fruitful. Wherefore our Vulgate says, speaking of the sinner, that his ways become every day more polluted: "His ways are always grievous," (Ps. x. 5 :) the Hebrew reads with greater force: "The ways of him bring forth at all times;" that is, his ways every day branch out further into new ways, which are fatal to perdition: "His ways bring forth, bring forth." Mournful fruitfulness! S. Thomas Aquinas, tracing the causes of this fecundity, especially assigns two in his writings. Firstly, because it removes from us the barriers which restrain us from evil; secondly, because it adds an impetus to that weight which by itself carries us to the precipice. As the fall of a lame man can be caused in two ways; either by taking away the crutches upon which he supports himself, or by throwing him headlong upon the earth. And to explain, in order, a like doctrine: nature has placed in the mouth of our wayward and rebellious concupiscences two strong bits; so that in the manner of ardent and unsubdued colts, they may not draw with them the soul over the precipice. These bits are—fear and modesty: "Nature," says Tertullian, "hath cast over every evil, either fear or shame." Consider Cain. He was stimulated by envy to commit fratricide; how much had he not at first to struggle with, and how greatly had he not to contend against these two bits? Although no one could be more wicked without being punished, nevertheless he passed restless nights, he slept interrupted sleeps, he spent disturbed and melancholy days; so that, according to Scripture, he lost the complexion and countenance even of a man: "His countenance fell"—it fell. (Gen. iv. 5.) Not other-

wise does it happen, my hearers, to any one, who after a life either perfectly pure, or for a long time Christianly ordered, becomes tempted either to commit the first sin, or to make a new return to old sins. The soul, accustomed to appear pure at the tribunal of reason, and to have with her, the good testimony of a well-governed conscience, is naturally ashamed of being obliged to present herself before this tribunal stained, and feels the reproaches of its appearing. Being accustomed to treat with God, as friend to friend, and to invoke Him confidently with the sweet name of FATHER, she now fears to be ungrateful to Him, and dreads to provoke His wrath. How frequently she has heard the unhappiness of the guilty, the uncertainty of repentance, the severity of the judgment, the cruelty of hell mentioned; all this, the soul remembers, or to speak more truly, all this, faith suggests to her in that moment—it discomforts, it perturbs, and it brings her into great fear. Now what are the effects of the first transgressions? what do they do? They so remove these bits, that after the first sin, the sinner boldly hastens on to the second; thence with more courage to the third, until the reins wholly removed by passion, he runs at full speed along the paths that lead to death; “When a man loses shame through one act of sin, or anything else that restrained him from sin, through this loss he falls into another sin.” (Sum. Theol. I. 2, q. 57, Art. 3.)

It is wont to happen in this respect, says S. Chrysostom, as we see it happen with our garments. On the occasion of some joyful arrival, or of any other festive solemnity, you put on a new coat, of a new fashion. As long as its first beauty lasts, how careful you are of it—

how you save it! Care is taken that you never wear it where it may be in danger of being soiled; you put it on and take it off with great respect; you brush it with attention; you put it in a wardrobe, well shut and well guarded, where the dust cannot spoil it. But let us note, that when its first lustre is faded, or when it contracts a spot which discolours it; already that which was before the festive coat, by little and little becomes the every-day coat. You guard it no longer, either from the dust or from the rain; you wear it at all times, you throw it in any place, as if it were a coat of no value. My beloved hearers, when you are in grace, "the unspotted garment," as S. Chrysostom calls it, you carry upon your back a precious garment, by which you appear not only to the angels, but to GOD Himself, fair, pleasing, and dear. But ah! take care of exposing it to the first spots: "Take heed, that in no way it be defiled;" otherwise it will not be long before you throw it into the dust along with every most sordid and filthy impurity: "If you despise the first or the second spot, it will seem no grave matter to you should the whole become polluted." (S. Chrysos. Hom. Ad Pop. Ant. xxii.)

Nor let the danger of which I speak appear exaggerated to you from the terror which the scandalous manners of libertines now cause to you; since even they themselves had once that same horror for that life which now is in ill favour with every one except themselves. In beholding any one reduced to such a state, how can it be, you say, that that person whom I once knew to be so pure, and so exemplary for Christian habits, is become overwhelmed in so great an abyss? "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed." (Lam. iv. 1.) I will tell

you quickly, answers the father and doctor S. Augustine : "the corruption began ;" there burnt in that person, an anger, which from the first transport passed into a habit ; there was awakened in that person, a love, which being sensible at first, afterwards degenerated into sensual passion : "Corruption began ; thence it progressed in evil courses ; thence onwards to the most wicked crimes." (S. Augustine, Ps. lii.) That this is quite true, behold, adds the holy man, a band of young men, (whom the HOLY SPIRIT describes to us in the divine Book of Wisdom) who having at length shaken off the paternal subjection, with eagerness invite each other to take pleasure : "Come therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth." (Wisd. ii. 6.) Intolerance of restraint, and love of liberty, these are the sad presages of worse events about to happen. Notwithstanding let us await the issue, and let it not be burdensome to us to follow their footsteps. Behold them negligent and idle, wandering here and there, only intent upon gathering roses, of which to form for their head a crown and an ornament : "Let us crown ourselves with roses." They desired to appear gay, perfumed, brilliant, fine. Already they begin to pass from bad to worse ; nevertheless I should be contented if their passion would remain here, but they will not be contented with so much, no, they will not. In short, hear how these libertines resolve to deflower every meadow without regard : "Let no meadow escape our riot."

Ah! green and beautiful little meadows, if a thick hedge round about you does not afford shelter, to what abuses and thefts are you exposed ! A just man, a keeper of that estate, and a widow woman, a guardian of those gar-

dens, raise their voices to correct and to reprove them, and these insolent ones in the height of their iniquity, did not spare the woman : "Let us not spare the widow ;" and against the man excited more devilishly, they prepare crosses and gibbets with which to torture him : "Let us therefore lie in wait for the just . . . for he is contrary to our doings . . . let us examine him by outrages and tortures . . . let us condemn him to a most shameful death." (Wisdom ii. 12, 19, 20.) Do you remember, resumes S. Augustine, the first intention : "Let us crown ourselves with roses?" Garlands and roses, what more meet for the flower of one's age? "what more delicate? what more graceful?" Could you ever have expected, that from garlands one could pass on to crosses, and from roses to swords? to look for crosses from this gentleness, and to expect swords from it? Nevertheless so it came to pass : "Corruption begins, thence is made a passage for bad habits, thence onwards to the most wicked crimes." You hearers, as persons more used to the ways of the world, do you know whether there may not be in your town any copy of this ancient example? Do you know whether any young man, carefully brought up from his tenderest years, whose family and connections trusted that he should one day be their ornament, their glory, and their support, may have become the scandal of the citizens, and the entire ruin of a paternal estate; so that neither the counsels of the wise, to which as a deaf adder he stops up his ears, nor the advice of his confessor, to whom now, except at Easter, he no longer goes, nor the tears of his parents, which he despises as tiresome and childish, make any impression upon his heart? If it should be so, learn that so it comes to pass; a roving too

lawlessly, a conversing unguardedly, a courting too freely, an immoderate licence of going to every amusement, and to every evening entertainment; all this, by little and little, disposes him to the first sin. This committed, shame is lost; that committed, and subjection is cast away: no longer fearing restraint, with confidence he gives himself up to dissimulations and dissipations, going on to greater and greater excesses; beginning that sin, which had no order, nor limits, nor end. "Corruption began: thence it progressed in evil courses, thence onwards to the most wicked crimes."

In addition, continues S. Thomas Aquinas, not only is one sin the cause of another;—since it breaks those restraints which keep us back from evil—but because it also positively disposes the soul to fall, and imparts to her the necessary impetus: "From one act of sin, a man is brought to this state—that he commits more easily another act very like to the first." Men are commonly accustomed to complain of the great disorder occasioned in the soul of each one, by the guilty spot of original sin; and to adduce this in excuse for the many and most grave faults which they commit; as if from that fountain flowed altogether the venom of their crimes: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; (so says even David of himself;) and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Ps. li. 5.) I do not wish to examine these excuses, and I will allow such lamentations to pass current. But precisely from this grief, I draw an argument upon which to reason more forcibly. If so great facility to sin was originated in all of us by that sin in which we were conceived, since it awakened the lust which quietly slept in the bosom of innocence, what will it be, dearly beloved, what will it be

when that lust becomes stimulated by us; and to its native brutality there is added besides, the stimulus of the actual sin; when to the intellect already blind, it adds new and more thick darknesses, new and more brilliant sparks to the smoking tinder? Can we believe that its flames will then be contented with little fuel? Ah! no, bewails Solomon, after having in himself experienced these burnings: "There are three things that are never satisfied . . . the fire that saith not, It is enough." (Prov. xxx. 15, 16.)

On the contrary, it often happens (as S. Augustine thoughtfully observes) that to hide and to cover the first sin it is necessary to commit several others much more grievous than that which it is wished to conceal: "Sins are added to sins, so that sins which are done aid in the committal of other sins." (S. August. in Joan. x.) Ahab, covetous of extending his dominions, desires the vineyard of another. He cannot obtain this whilst the legitimate owner is living; therefore the owner must be killed without pity. But to condemn a person manifestly innocent appears too excessive even to a cruel tyrant. Therefore he designed a plot, and his passion took the colour of feigned zeal. He proclaimed throughout the kingdom a fast; and the ceremonies of the sanctuary themselves served to cloak the violence. Then they adopted calumnies to hide the profanation of the rites. Two suborned witnesses in solemn judgment, accuse the good Naboth of having blasphemed God and the king. In such a way the death of the possessor was believed to be the legitimate penalty for his sins; the lapse of the vineyard to the royal treasury was believed to be just, and so two tyrannies were hid, the one under the other. Oh! how

many heinous crimes were necessary to gloss over the usurpation of one estate : David also was allured by using his eyes too freely ; he burned with lust, and committed adultery with the wife of another. This is a sin so very loathsome, that in every way it ought to remain concealed. But how can this be done, if the husband, called in haste from the camp, constantly refuses to sleep in his house ? Therefore he was invited to a banquet, and there with foaming cups of choice wine he was incited to drink to intoxication. Perhaps when heated and satiated, he will come to do that which, sober and in his right mind, he would refuse to do. This art even fails : neither does the second sin of scandal suffice to mask the first sin of incontinence. He was therefore put to the siege, and he, the faithful Uriah, exposed to a certain death, whilst the widow Bathsheba was taken to wife. In such a way, the death of the soldier is believed to be the issue of the battle ; the son who will be born is believed to be the fruit of new nuptials ; thus two treacheries are hidden the one under the other. Oh ! how many enormous crimes are these, and all to cover one outgoing of wantonness ? “Sins are added to sins that the sins which are committed may aid in the commission of other sins.” People add the perjuries, in order to hide the frauds from the purchasers ; they add the sacrileges, to hide obscenities from the confessor ; they destroy offspring, to hide lewdness from the parents ; they add murders, in order to hide the robberies from the public : “Sins are added to sins ; that the sins which are committed may aid in the commission of other sins.”

It happens thus, seasonably admonishes Jeremiah, it happens thus. Whoever begins to tread the path of vice,

generally becomes like an uncertain traveller, who being surprised on a dark night upon the slippery declivity of a bank, stumbles and falls; and wishing to raise himself falls again, and slips, and is carried down into the abyss with great force: "Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness; they shall be driven on and fall therein." (Jer. xxiii. 12.)

And oh! that I had in my hand! oh that I had in my hand the keys of that abyss where those blind ones journey and fall; that, to the salutary horror of my hearers, I could open it under their very eyes, and cry aloud, Behold, these are the wanton, who in their green years were seduced to taste the joy of sensuality; they believed its flatteries, but the incautious ones did not perceive either in what darknesses they were casting themselves, or in what slippery places they were placing their feet. Therefore, the young and the falling were all one; they leave one friendship and tie themselves to another; they passed from the amorous looks to the ardent desires, and from the ardent desires to the wantonness, and from the wantonness to the liberties, and from the liberties to the habits. Behold them at length defiled and lewd in hell: "Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness; they shall be driven on and fall therein." Behold, these are the covetous, who began to love money immoderately; but they, unhappy ones, did not consider how greatly the shining of gold dazzles the sight. One unjust gain enticed them to attempt another; the amelioration of their condition excites the desire for change of fortune; they passed from the oppressed widows to despoil the minors, and from conventional usuries to more manifest injustice; behold them at the last in hell,

stained with the blood of others : " Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness ; they shall be driven on and fall therein." Behold, these are the vindictive, who through some displeasure, I know not what, placed themselves on the *punctilio* ; but they, the senseless ones, did not perceive either how blind or how hasty was their anger ; the refusal of peace was the provoking of new offences ; they subdued one rival, and by so doing, raised up a hundred ; they passed from reproaches to quarrels, from quarrels to settled hate, and from settled hate to repugnance ; behold them at the last with their weapons in hell : " Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness, &c." All these, you see, all imagined that they could restrain themselves at their will ; they imagined that the venting of their passion would serve to satiate it, but indeed it was not so. The precipice, the darkness, the slipperiness, the violence of the habit, and of the custom, precipitately drew them into perdition : " They shall be driven on and fall therein." and now having tried it, they confess, but too late, that the inflamed appetite " never says, It is enough."

What can I say to you, my beloved, that is more efficacious both to instruct you and to awaken your fears on this point, than to point out the *wretched end* of those who, from the crowd of emotions, who from the impetus of passion, were carried far beyond those limits which at the beginning of their career they would not have imagined it possible to reach ? Judas Iscariot imagined, that he would benefit himself from the charities alone which were offered to the SAVIOUR ; but passion led him to sell even CHRIST Himself for the sake of gain. Luther imagined that he would only vindicate, I know not what wrong,

which was taught him by his proud spirit, but passion led him on to be the father of heretics, and of heresies. That which S. Gregory the Great once wrote, is very true of him, "These are the causes of increasing sin, that no one when he has sinned lies quietly down, but ever descends to worse things." (Moral. xvi. 11.) Wherefore to arrest him who has plunged into vice, no less a gift is needed, believe me; no less is needed, than the special and chosen compassion of GOD. Now what would become of you, resumes S. Augustine, if GOD Himself, instead of supporting you, "were to urge you forward (to sin) that you might fall therein?"

With two kinds of punishment—hear the solemn doctrine of this Father, who is most surely to be relied on in this particular, (if he is worthy of credit on any subject) in these profound and authoritative things which belong to divine grace—with two kinds of punishment GOD punishes in this life the sins of transgressors. Some are punishments which are called temporal: such are the fevers which consume the inward parts; such are the lawsuits which impoverish the house; such are the hailstorms which desolate the sown lands; such are the wars, pestilences, and floods. Israel sins, and GOD punishes him by creating fiery serpents, which carry in their teeth poison and fire. Manasseh sins, and GOD smites him, shaking him suddenly from the throne, and reducing him to servitude. Nebuchadnezzar sins, and GOD punishes him by despoiling him of the purple, and by banishing him, as a wild beast, to bellow in the forest. But these are the stripes of a loving FATHER, Who desires to lead back His wicked and erring children to a right understanding; as S. Jerome says, "He corrects them as if

they were smitten, and yet not so much for punishment as for correction." The true scourge of a hostile God is, when in revenge for your first sin, He grants to you a very long range of sinning, which must ultimately end in the irreparable vengeance of eternal fire; according to S. Augustine, "He avenges those sins which are avenged; which beget and foster sins." (De Nat. et Grat. xxii.) Since sin, according to the Angelic doctor, cannot possibly have, properly, punishment for its motive: both because the punishment is willed by God, and sin cannot be willed by Him; and also that punishment could not be desired by the sinner, though he cannot but will the sin; still it may truly be said, that one sin is the punishment of another; for in the punishment of one, God may, and often does, will the withdrawal of those graces, from whence He foresees that the other sin will follow;—a withdrawal, which the sinner would most certainly not desire; "Because sin has something added to it, which is contrary to the will of the sinner, such as the withdrawal of grace, from which it follows that man can sin: wherefore sin is called the punishment of the preceding sin." (S. Thom. Aquin. ad Rom. lec. 7.) Examine the Scriptures, adds S. Augustine; examine the Scriptures. The ancient philosophers sinned through pride, refusing to give honour to that God Whose most holy countenance they had beheld mirrored forth in creation. (Rom. i. 20.) And God, for their abasement, permits them to fall into the filthy desires of the flesh; and permits, that in order to gratify their inordinate desires, they should attempt some ways, ways the most filthy, forbidden by nature even to the beasts, until they are overwhelmed; and despairing, they go down to hell. Do you mark? The

first sin of those profane ones was pride: "Pride is the first sin," says S. Augustine, (Enarr. in Ps. lvii.) the final punishment is exterminating flames; "Eternal fire is the last punishment." And so many detestable debauches, and so many unlawful excesses of unnatural and brutal men;—what were they? They were, it is true, voluntary and free sins; but at the same time, they were the punishment of pride: "They are *media*, and they are sins, and the penalty of sins." Saul sins through disobedience to the prophet in not waiting for the sacrifice: and God permits that from disobedience to the prophet, he should fall into hatred against David; and from the hatred against David, into cruelty against the priests; from cruelty against the priests, into the iniquitous art of consulting witches; afterwards into final desperation; and the sword being unsheathed—which was not girded on for such a need, nor for such a use—it rent his side upon the mountains of Gilboa. Do you mark? The first sin of the prince was disobedience: "The first sin was disobedience;" the last infinite punishment was eternal fire: "The last punishment is eternal fire." And so many mad envies, and so many furious persecutions, and so many most atrocious cruelties, and the magic, and the sorcery, and the incantations;—what were they? they were the most heinous sins without any doubt; but at the same time they were the punishment of disobedience: "They are *media*, and they are sins and the punishment of sins." Was it not forsooth the punishment and at the same time the sin of Rehoboam, who obstinately deafened his ear to the counsels of the judicious old men, to support the follies of some morbid headstrong youths? The Scripture however proves to us that so it happened; that God

abandoned him on account of his sins : The LORD had turned against him ; (1 Kings xii. 15.) Was it not the punishment, and at the same time the sin of Amaziah, who proudly despised the offers of peace of king Joash in order to follow the ravings of his warlike fury ? The Scriptures nevertheless affirm to us that thus it happened, since, on account of his misdeeds, GOD willed him to be betrayed : “ for it came of GOD, that He might deliver them into the hand of their enemies, because they sought after the gods of Edom.” (2 Chron. xxv. 20.) But the wish to demonstrate by induction from facts, the truth which I preach to you, would be an endless task : “ We are able to enumerate many other things, in which it would plainly appear to be according to the hidden judgment of GOD, that it is the sin itself which goes before, that is itself the punishment of sin.” (S. August. C. Jul. v. 3, 11.) If any one had said to these, and to so many others, of whom both history and hell are full ; if any one had said to these, when the desire seized them of departing from the right course : Mark carefully, mark ; because from this sin, as from a poisonous root, follows the bitter fruit of your ruin. GOD, in punishment for it, will pour over you such a spirit of giddiness, that you will stagger on the smoothest ways, and will fall after the exact manner of foolish and drunken men. Do you think that they would have believed him ? They would have answered that which the dissolute of our time answer :—Ah ! these are the fatal forebodings of melancholy minds. If GOD provides the medicine, it is a sign that He wills to cure the disease. Paradise would be solitary enough if the innocent alone flew there. To most people, the grace of repentance is given, therefore He will also give it to us.

But GOD certainly did not give it to such as these. For them the first sin was like a magnetic ring, which joining several others to itself, formed at length that heavy chain through which they were drawn to everlasting destruction. Let us fear, my beloved, let us fear such sad examples. Let us fear the divine Oracles which in so many places point out so grievous a punishment. Let us fear that wound of sin, that great wound, that insatiable wound, that cruel wound. Because the not fearing it, would be the most certain sign of having incurred it, or of not being far from being obliged to incur it.


SECOND PART.

I see plainly, beloved, that some one of you has been wishing to oppose me for this long time, had he been able to speak out after his mind. Father, he would say, for how very few have you this morning preached your sermon. Because the persons are now sufficiently few, especially those who have arrived at mature age, who have not made some false step, and who have walked perpetually in the path of divine commands. Perhaps it may be the privilege of some happy soul whom, in the flower of his age, GOD prevented with His grace, and whom He hastened to take into the cloisters of some religious house, as into some secure place. He who was left, as we *Seculars* are left, he who was left, in a sea so stormy, it is not credible that he can have navigated always so warily, that he may never have dashed himself against the rocks which are scattered about in a gulf so treacherous. No, dearly beloved. Although I know that many are the dangers of wandering in the world, I do not however subscribe so guilty an opinion of it, nor would I

lingly believe, that rectitude of life and innocence wholly abandoned by it. This is a stratagem of the ly, by which they wish to justify their conduct, and under their conscience bold and free; and the deplorable contagion of our time as a violent pestilence, infects and contaminates all human hearts. As in universal idolatry, which during the reign of Ahab, ly lorded over Israel, GOD found His seven thousand ul ones, "who had not bowed the knees to the of Baal," (1 Kings xix. 18,) who refused to adore iniquitous Baal: so however ill-mannered and licen- may be the age; in the same place, nevertheless, are some souls which are dear to the LORD, and ul to Him, who have not bowed the knee to the l idol of fashion; souls which will serve as a re- to sinners; which will disarm them of excuse, and will give evident knowledge, that vices are of the but not of the times; that vices are of men, and not ces. It rejoices me to believe, that of these blessed many will form for me to-day a crown of rejoicing. ould one alone become such by hearing me, for his alone I should count my labours to be well spent. ee, therefore, I turn myself, O happy soul, that thou preserve thy conscience white and pure; and I cate and entreat thee most ardently: "take heed, y any means thou shouldst be defiled:" guard it ively, jealously, constantly: guard it by the modesty eyes, with a repugnance for their actions, with the nce of libertines, with a devoted attendance at the nents: "take heed, take heed, lest by any means shouldst be defiled." Ah! but if one day thou lst begin to allow it, before long it will be- more contemptible and more worthless than the

dust: "If you despise the first or the second spot, it will not seem to you a grave matter even if you should become altogether defiled." Behold the fearful treasures of darkness and of giddiness which GOD holds in readiness, in order to outpour them for the blinding of, and taking vengeance upon sinners. Thou hast ever thy mind unclogged by guilty maxims, foolish maxims, which are deceits of the world;—the lamp of GOD continually shines and glistens over thy head: "See, that the darkness does not surround thee;" take care that for the purposes of hidden divine judgment, darkness does not come suddenly to overtake thee, and to make thee heavy, so and in such a manner that "thy way become as if slippery in darkness:" so that while increasing in years, it can be no other truly than a going down by falling precipitately from bad to worse, and from worse into the very worst state, till death.

Those then, who from the error of sin, have turned to the path of righteousness, and for a long time have walked as becometh Christians, they ought to thank—but truly from the heart—that most sweet FATHER of compassions, Who designed to shed over their souls the riches of His goodness, when with greater reason He might have shed the riches of His wrath: "Bless ye the GOD of heaven; give glory to Him in the sight of all that live, because He hath shown His mercy to you." (Tobit xii. 6.) But you do not wish, O my beloved, to lose yourselves by that false process of reasoning which drew Samson at last to be the prey and the sport of his enemies. Twice he escaped from the snares of his crafty Delilah; for he was rendered proud by the dangers he had avoided: let us turn, he said, to the trial, for now the escape is sure; "I will go out as at other times, and shake myself."



Judges xvi. 20.) Oh wretched one! that he did not now the dreadful decree which was fixed in heaven, of bandoning him to the hands of the Philistines, if he should return the third time to the lawless band: "he wist not hat the LORD was departed from him." You argue there-ore wrongly, from mercies past to mercies to come: in-asmuch as there may be in the words of Ezekiel, there may be, a fatal sin, which is known only to GOD: whose "iniquity shall have an end," (Ezekiel xxi. 25.) You are always able to stay yourself from a sin that is committed; but you will never wish to stay yourself. You will always be able to repent of a sin which is committed; but you will not, but you will never wish to repent. You can always save yourself from the effect of a sin committed; but yet you will never desire to save yourself from it. S. Augustine infers from the sacred testimony of Scripture, that "we are taught that as long as each one of us expects to be converted, so long is it that the measure of our sins will not have been consummated;"—consummated, so that they are perfected both in their number and measure; then "they are smitten immediately, neither is any further pardon reserved for them." But if you fear, O my beloved, such a punishment, you are hoping even at this time that you have not fallen into it. He who has been stricken from heaven by that thunder-bolt, has no longer any sense, either of divine threatenings or tenderness. Abandoned to sin and blindness, the miserable one no longer lives, save in taking pleasure, in falling from sin to sin. Unhappy state of reprobation and of death! Yet this is the state, to lead you into which, the first sin will come, after this my sermon, to tempt you to its committal—God grant that it may not be so with you.

VIII.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

"Truth, LORD; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."—S. Matth. xv. 27.

UNREASONABLE, ever unreasonable, appeared to me the distrust which arose in the heart of the people of Israel when worn out by their sojournings, and worn down and feeble through a very long fast, they turned their languid gaze up to the hill and down to the plain of that poorly furnished and most vast desert; "Can GOD," they cried, disconsolately with a faint voice, "Can GOD furnish a table in the wilderness?" (Ps. lxxviii. 19.) Will GOD be able so to do, as to convert these stones into bread? Will GOD be able so to do, as to transform these barren mountains into food? "Can GOD furnish a table in the wilderness?" And why should it not be so? Since He has been able to solidify in stone the inconstant waters, and to melt into water the arid rocks? So quickly then canst thou forget the compassionate providence which GOD has for you; considering that there is shining continually before your eyes the pillar which He kindles to illuminate by night, and that there is extended over your head the cloud which thickens in order to overshadow you by day?

But let us not waste words upon the mistrustful Hebrews, who are now dust, when such reproofs are more rightly due to Christians themselves. Behold, says S. Chrysostom, the grand banquet that God has placed before us by laying out the earth and the sea for our good, as if they were two most sumptuous tables : "God made a double table, preparing at the same time the earth and the sea." However, can it be believed, that there are men of so capricious a mind, and of so ungrateful a disposition, that, where the very dogs themselves are accustomed to feed with the master, who throws crumbs to them from his table, these are on the contrary so bold as to murmur against that Divine Providence that fills them. "When they had received it they murmured." In the act itself of being fed by Providence, either they doubt of, or complain, or do not trust in it. "When they had received they murmured." However to quiet so many tumults, I take this morning the side of the outraged, though adorable Providence, and I will show you that there is nothing more foolish than to *doubt* the Providence of God ; that there is nothing more unjust than to *complain of* the Providence of God ; that there is nothing more hurtful to our earthly interests than *not to confide* in the Providence of God. Behold the whole subject of my sermon to-day divided into three parts. Let us begin.

Do not distress yourselves, my hearers, I pray you, that if, undertaking to show firstly how unreasonable it may be to *doubt* the divine Providence, I should seem to be doubting of your faith. I know that you are firm and constant in the catholic faith, which was drunk by you in all purity even from the breast ; but I also know that there

is no heart rooted so firmly in the faith that the infernal tempter does not endeavour to shake with his sophisms. Who was ever more faithful than David? Nevertheless, beholding the apparent disorders that happened from hour to hour among his people, seeing innocence humbled, and impiety victorious, the cabal favoured, and sincerity betrayed, sins unpunished, and holiness troubled; seeing the wicked exalted even above the cedars of Lebanon, and the just, on the contrary, exposed as butts to the marks of adversity, he felt himself strongly tempted to doubt whether any one were watching to govern this earth, or if GOD truly, Who is concealed in the tabernacles of His light, can repose securely ordering the events of men. "My steps had well-nigh slipped . . . when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." (Ps. lxxiii. 2, 3.) This temptation may perhaps assail any one of you, because in our days it frequently happens that the sinners are prosperous, and the just are oppressed. But to doubt therefore, whether there is a Providence in heaven, although an excuse could be found for a pagan, since at least he would be entitled to compassion for this doubting, says S. Chrysostom, should be called amongst Christians the highest folly and fearful madness; to whom has been revealed an eternal kingdom for the just, and an eternal prison for the guilty. "It is unworthy to ask why the good exist weighed down with troubles, but the evil are in peace; a kingdom being already revealed, I will show to you the reward of a future state." We believe nevertheless by faith, that this present life in which we are living now is not a place of punishment or of reward. We believe that as the good things of this world are not a fitting reward for virtue, so nevertheless

those evils which here overtake us are not a proportionate punishment for vice. Another reward is offered to you, O holy souls who are here listening to me, than a few spans of land defended from the hail, than a few days of life free from cares. Your sins demand another punishment, O sinners intoxicated by present prosperity, than an unforeseen failure which plunges you into penury, than an annual crisis which may rob you of your income. Behold, O just ones, that in heaven, Providence awaits you, to crown your travails. Behold, O unrighteous ones, the hell where Providence awaits you to tread down your pride. Providence chastises you at the present time as lawful children for whom the inheritance is reserved; but Providence adorns you, O wicked, at this time, as stubborn victims already destined to destruction. There, in that vast valley, GOD will unfold that mighty net which He weaves now in secret over the children of men; and when it is seen how well it is woven, and of what fine work is the weaving, there will be no one bold enough to open his mouth: "All iniquity shall stop her mouth." (Ps. cvii. 42.) Licentiousness murmurs and blasphemes at the present time, because it does not judge of things that are real, it only regards those which are sensible and transitory. But when it shall behold the reward to which afflictions will exalt the predestinate, and the misery on the other hand in which prosperity shall plunge the sinners, when GOD shall render to each one according to his merit; to the one retribution of glory, to the other condemnation of punishment, then the trembling iniquity will quickly become dumb; "All iniquity shall stop her mouth."

Although, to speak truly, I could wish to excuse in

any way such doubts, if in the life to come only, God might be expected to punish sins and to reward goodness: but how many malicious designs are not seen at all times to be confounded by Divine Providence, and how many cunning plotters are cast by Providence into the very snares which they had planned for the ruin of others. How many proud Hamans, expire suspended upon the scaffolds which they have raised for vengeance against the Mordecais? How many wanton old men, fall buried under the stones which they have collected for the destruction of the Susannas? How many rapacious Jezebels, die torn in pieces by the dogs in the lands usurped from the innocent Naboths? Of the nineteen kings of Israel, all equally idolaters, some perished miserably, being slain in war, others fell barbarously murdered by their own subjects, some slowly rotted in prison, others cast themselves into the fire to be consumed. Amongst the kings of Judah too, those who were constantly doing evil, were ever constantly unhappy, subject to rebellions, to imprisonments, to desolations, to destructions. Prudence desires that I should speak of ancient times; besides they would not fail to tell of the vessels of wrath which are poured out by GOD upon the wicked of our day. There have been seen also in our age certain strange and singular events, certain wise ones of the earth cast down through their own counsels, and by their overseeing so much blinded, that he who beheld their plots and heard their sad stories was compelled to exclaim, "Verily there is a GOD that judgeth the earth." (Ps. lviii. 12.) Whereas to speak of the just, amongst whom, are there not known, Josephs, miraculously carried from the fetters to the throne? the Daniels

wonderfully delivered from the raging lions ? The Johns, marvellously rescued from the roaring flames of Babylon ? And the most pious Esthers of low estate exalted to reign in Shushan ? How now then is it that some wicked one having prospered in his plots from hour to hour, has more power to make our faith waver, than so many who are ensnared in their own traps, and who are like spiders allured into their webs, have to make it strong ? So many ambitious Nimrods confused and scattered in the midst of their work ? So many rapacious Heliodoruses scourged by the hand of the angels ; so many proud Siloamites crushed under the ruins of their towers ? We should be very ignorant if in this “continuous school of Providence,” as the world was called by Cassiodorus, we did not learn that there is a wisdom indeed above the knowledge of man, a wisdom which makes sport of breaking up their designs, and overturning their machinations at its will.

The allowing then that some, either as impure animals disport themselves in their obscenity, or as cruel tigers fatten themselves upon the blood of others ; this even flows from that universal Providence which governs all things. Wherefore God permits these, says S. Augustine, in order that so many blessings might not cease, which would fail, if sinners were not in the world. “He judged it better to do good things concerning sins, than not to permit any sin to exist.” Because, O hearers, where would be the unconquered constancy of the martyrs, if God had not allowed tyrants to rule in the world ? Where would be the admirable learning of the doctors, if God had not permitted the great errors of the heretics ? Where would be the glorious triumph of the Catholic faith if

GOD had not allowed the idolaters to become infuriated at their pleasure? Nay, where would even He, that Divine Mediator be, the exalted "First-begotten of every creature," and the stupendous marvel of all ages, if, as it is certain that He could, GOD had restrained the sin of the Protoplast? Where that adorable Sacrifice of propitiation and that immaculate Victim of peace, if He had not permitted the betrayal of Judas and the obstinate fury of the Pharisees? "What great good GOD wrought for us from the sin of the traitor Judas! What great good from the cruelty of the Jews," says S. Augustine. Ah, my brethren, concludes the saint, impress firmly in the depth of your hearts the edifying and consolatory truth, that all the evils which are permitted by GOD are allowed by Him for the good of His elect. For so high a purpose He fills the wicked with authority and power, so that they may be available alone for the refining of the just. "By the temporal power of those who are about to be condemned, GOD exercises discipline upon those who are about to be liberated." If you see a rebellious son who shakes off the paternal yoke and usurps his father's kingdom, learn that it is not to honour Absalom that GOD raises him upon the throne, but only for the discipline of his father, and for the tremendous punishment of the parricide. If you see a cruel king who sets fire to Jerusalem and robs its temple, it is not to enrich Antiochus that GOD permits the pillaging of the sacred ornaments, but only to purify His people, and much rather to intoxicate the proud monarch. "By the temporal power of those who are about to be condemned, GOD exercises discipline upon those who are about to be liberated."

Neither can I rightly here omit two most striking re-

flections which the two luminaries of Greece, SS. Chrysostom and Basil both make in striking confirmation of Divine Providence, upon the well known treachery of Cain. If death was a punishment expressed solely against sin, for what reason was it that the most innocent Abel was the first to feel the stroke? If the cruel Cain was guilty of so great a crime, for what reason was it that the LORD did not take away suddenly his life with signal judgment? Oh ever adorable way of Providence, by few understood! GOD willed, says S. Basil, GOD willed that by the cruel tyranny, the empire so ill-founded should become unstable. Thence He ordained that the first death in the world should be innocent, so that that foundation might be weak upon which death was coming to found the kingdom; and so that we might early conceive the sweet hope of a joyful resurrection, "GOD first permitted Abel to be taken away from life that He might thus overthrow the foundation of death." He willed, says S. Chrysostom, GOD willed that Cain from his chastisement might serve for a curb to posterity. Death would have been the punishment for his sin, while life would come to be an antidote for the sins of others. To know that the fratricide was dead would have made little or no impression upon the minds of the hearers. But to behold with their own eyes that desperate one, a wanderer from place to place, with his hair horribly neglected, with his look fiercely bloody, with his countenance restlessly animated, would have deeply engraven in men a most lasting horror of being wicked. May he live therefore for many ages in the frightful fear of every one, may his body bear with it its punishment, and may it carry medicine to others. "Therefore GOD did not

kill him because it would not have been truly of equal advantage to have heard of his death, and to have seen the fratricide himself paying back his punishment." S. Clement of Alexandria, however, asserts, that to dispute whether there is a Providence is a question of fools, therefore it ought rather to be decided by effect than by argument, since wherever we may turn our gaze, Providence is everywhere visibly presented to us in a thousand most beautiful and marvellous effects. "There are certain important questions which deserve punishment, such as to inquire whether there be a Providence, since this is manifest from all things that are seen." Neither till now have I undertaken to demonstrate it to you; no, hearers, I have only undertaken to suggest to you some means by which you may be able to refute them if you should hear propounded certain rash propositions which the libertines so foolishly promulgate.

But if amongst ourselves, O hearers, there are few into whose minds it comes to doubt concerning a Providence; not so exceptional, believe me, are those, who seeing themselves in want and unfortunate, complain of it unjustly at all times. I say that they complain of it unjustly, and to point out the injustice of such complaints, it would assuredly be sufficient to repeat that which the angry master in the Gospel once said to the complaining labourers in his vineyard. Hearing the whisperings of the labourers who were hired in the morning, who angrily muttered between their teeth on seeing that an equal reward was given to those who towards evening had come to the field; "And what?" said he, raising his authoritative voice to reprove them, "And what? Perhaps you intend to play the master in my

house? For a penny you sold to me your work this morning, and a penny was paid to you. What have you to say? What, if I should give the same even to those who came late; who desires to tie my hands? It would be ridiculous indeed to say that I have not the power to dispose of my money as I please, and that you should dare in my house to make laws, and to prescribe the measures of my bounty. Go, 'Take that thine is, and go thy way, . . . is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?'" (S. Matth. xx. 14, 15.) Do you understand this, you who are complainers, you who so often and so bitterly complain on seeing others lifted up to high estate, and you yourselves cast down to the depths of misery; seeing some disporting themselves in the lap of abundance, while you like Lazarus are languishing in need; those who behold others having wherewith to fatten both horses and dogs with ostentation, whilst you with great toil are hardly having the wherewith to feed yourselves and your children; you who are noting some to sail ever with a fair wind, which to you is always contrary, whilst you are perilously tossed about to be broken in pieces amongst the rocks. Do you understand? GOD is Master of His own, and can bestow it on whom He will, and can deny it to whom He will. Moreover, GOD does not owe it to any one by right, as to the giving of it to the one rather than to the other, and there is not, neither can there be in Him any respect of persons. The grumbling about God's gifts, both is and ever will be in you a most unjust complaint; "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with Mine own?" That I should be spared, says S. Paul, to see even this, that vessels formed of humble clay should raise them-

selves in sedition against the potter, and that they should ask the reason of Him why He had not fashioned them as others are, for the ornament and decoration of His workshop: "Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus?" (Rom. ix. 20.) Such I have made thee, because such I wished to make thee; and as it was in My power not to remove thee from the shapeless mass in which thou wouldest have for ever remained, devoid of being; so however it was according to My will to form of thee a vessel of honour or of dishonour: "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

But if I should continue in this line of argument, I should reach quickly the half of my sermon,—let us take another view of the matter, and we will show certainly not more evidently, but more easily the injustice of such a lament. Listen. Two most sublime Divine acts, the doctor, S. Augustine, teaches, unitedly concur to establish a Providence. One is the *intellect* with which God sees in one glance all things openly, and all the ends fitting each to their own nature. The other is the *will* with which God wills that all things should move to their proper end, not by tumult or by caprice, but by the ways which are known to Him, to order these things for the best, for the most perfect symmetry of the universe: "Divine Providence attains its end in Him Who includes in Himself the principles upon which He governs the universe."

Now what follows from this? Clearly it follows, that to murmur rightly at the laws prescribed by Him, it would be necessary for us to know as much as God

knows; it would be necessary that the most stupendous economy of things should be opened before our eyes so that we might be able to say justly that this event, or that, does or does not happen as it ought to do. To use a beautiful thought of S. Chrysostom, "If we were able to understand every disposition of GOD's Providence, we should be seen to have deservedly no cause for any sorrow." Otherwise the murmuring at Divine Providence because of one calamity, which does not appear right to our most short vision, would be greater folly, than at the first displaying of a picture, it would be to criticise, as disproportionate a figure which is only seen by us for a single moment. Come then, O complainers, and answer GOD Himself Who asks you: "Declare if thou knowest it all, . . . that thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof." (Job xxxviii. 18—20.) You who weep over the disorder, you who lament over the excesses, you who however humble you may be, aspire to be ranked amongst the reformers of the world,—do you know the secret ends of things and of living beings, so that you can direct each one in his proper person? When did you ever travel beyond the clouds in order to learn there to correct the seasons? When did you pass through the profound ways of the sea in order to learn there to direct the tempests? And of the many millions of men who are now living in the world, when did you ever learn to whom riches should be assigned, and to whom poverty; to whom lordship, and to whom vassalage; to whom power, and to whom weakness; so that the entire mass of the human republic may exist collected and joined together in order: "Declare if thou knowest it all."

And truly, says S. Paul, it is a marvellous effect, and I

am bold enough to call it a debt moreover to that universal Providence that governs all things; the maintaining the sections of the vast human family in a mutual union, through that regulated subordination of states, of conditions, of grades; and through that necessary opposition of poverty and of opulence; of nobility and of abjectness; of ignorance and of learning. Behold your body itself, and from that small world which you bear about with you, learn clearly how well exists that diversity of persons; some unhappy, others joyful; some wretched, others rich; some plebeian, others noble in the great world. And would there not be great disorder, my brethren, if your several members through an unlooked-for change, should all happen to be transformed into eyes? These may indeed be the most beautiful and brilliant part of man, but where then would be the hands for working? where then would be the feet for walking? where then would be the ears for hearing? Would not this by itself suffice to make of a body so useful and so active, an uncouth monster, incapable of its every action, if all our other members wearied of their office were seditiously to aspire to become eyes? "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? . . . where were the smelling?" (1 Cor. xii. 17.) And so in like manner it would tend to embroil society, and to root out the unity from the human race, if all were to be alike exalted in station, rich in income, robust in health, and prosperous in fortune. Some would refuse to the others service, help, and assistance. "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased Him," (ver. 18.) In the political body however, as in the physical, God has ordered after

His pleasure "as it hath pleased Him," but nevertheless with high and adorable Providence the different members, it is true, of office, of ministry, of grace, of dignity. Yet this diversity exactly and admirably concurs in the union of very many parties. There are the princes placed in high position as so many honourable heads of this body,—most true. But what then? are they able on this account to despise the vassals who are the most vigorous members of that body, and without whom they neither could exist or rule? No, says S. Paul, "the head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you." (1 Cor. xii. 21.) There are the nobles, who through the splendour of their birth are as the most sparkling eyes of this body;—most true. But what then? can they on this account be neglectful to the families who are the working arms through which they are served? No, adds S. Paul, "the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee." The rich are necessary for the poor; the great for the mean. But the mean and the poor, (humble yourselves, O great ones of the age,) the mean and the poor are even more necessary to the support and the honour of the great lords: "And those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour," (ver. 23.) And you, O poor, do you recognise at length the injustice of so many of your complaints. You grumble at Providence because like very many others you were not born wealthy and prosperous. Is it not so? But do you not see that this would have been to remove from the universe every tie, all order, all harmony, and in place of a beautiful and perfect body to form an abortion of the human race? "If the whole

body were the eye, where were the hearing, . . . where were the smelling?"

Gently, perhaps some one present will say to me, gently, I pray you, O Father; for you this morning do not understand, or at least do not appear to understand the significance of our woes. We do not at all complain that in this world, there are living, some rich and some poor; some afflicted, and some joyous; some unhappy, and others prosperous: this may nevertheless tend to that necessary subordination of which you spoke. But was it therefore necessary that we should be the particular poor? that we should be the afflicted? that we should be the unhappy? Was it necessary that others should be the head, and we the feet of that body? I understand. Your complaints therefore are not only unjust, because they spring from ignorance; but they are unjust besides, because they spring from pride. Ah! Let us confess it, dearly beloved; we have in the depth of our heart, an evil disposition of referring all things to ourselves, and a most vain pretension to be seen in the world as if we were alone in it; we desire to be distinguished by GOD, and, so to speak, to be greatly esteemed. However, let success in undertakings, elevation of rank, abundance of riches be granted to us. Behold the tumults ceased, and the complaints suppressed. If others then, groan under the scourge; if for a long time they rot in poverty, that signifies little. There is a GOD in heaven, there is a Providence, there is a caring for men. We know how to find in such a case some reasons which altogether justify Providence; we know how to find some most subtle disparities in order to show, that these gifts belong to our condition, and those miseries equally to that of others. So it is, hearers, so it

is. Whenever it is discussed concerning others, we are all attention to discover motives by which to vindicate the administration of a Providence, although it be very severe. We know how to say, that it regards rather our eternal than our temporal advantage; that Providence refines her elect in the crucible of tribulation; that it has some ends which it does not concern us to investigate. We know how to say all this, and as much more; because we know indeed how to rake up the sins, which GOD punishes in posterities and descendants. But if the burdening weight come to bear upon ourselves, we quickly bow down our heads, and like untamed oxen, low at the yoke. A spirit of self-love which warily insinuates itself even within the bone, makes our lawful discipline to appear bitter to us. This spirit, as is to be expected, requires a loving and more prudent treatment; for this moves the tongue to laments, and furnishes it with the accusations against Providence.

But these accusations I will tell you, O hearers, I will tell you plainly against whom they ought more justly to be directed. You complain of GOD, from Whom you have received life, talents, health, and means proportionate to your station. Of GOD do you complain? Ungrateful ones! Complain of that laziness in which you allow that strength to rot which GOD gave you for the obtaining of bread. Complain of that gaming, which consumes the gains which GOD sends you for the support of life. Complain of that lust, which absorbs the income which GOD assigned to you for the maintenance of your family. Complain of that sin, which little by little wastes the health that GOD gave to you as to every other one vigorous. If your dissolute, intemperate, immoderate, voluptuous life,

has at length led you either to fall from your position, or to load yourselves with debts, or to overwhelm yourselves by poverty and sickness; is the fault from heaven, and one for which you are able to accuse Providence? God mercifully has given, to some hardiness, to others wit; to some quickness of apprehension, to others industry; to others ability; to all certainly a capital, by which to live with sufficiency. If you, dearly beloved, either dissipate the talent obtained from Him, or negligently allow it to lie buried, you have no reason to complain of Him. He has cause rather to complain of you, and to reprove you strongly: "Wicked servant . . . wherefore then gavest not thou My money into the bank?" (S. Luke xix. 22, 23). However, let our lamentations now cease; and we, acknowledging as unjust our past complaints and our woes, let us humbly say with holy Job: "Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not," (xlii. 3.)

SECOND PART.

I have said, in the third place, if you remember, O hearers, that there is nothing more hurtful to our earthly interests than not to confide in the Providence of God, and to place our hopes anywhere but in it. It would take too long to gather from Holy Scripture such irrefragable authority as would inculcate this truth upon us; God coming at last to fulminate this fearful curse on him who places confidence in the favour of man; "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man." (Jer. xvii. 5.) It would be too long for us to repeat the numerous catalogues of those from whom the LORD withdrew His powerful and loving

protection ; for this reason truly, for this reason alone because they feared His Divine help would not be sufficient to save them. Let the one warning of Asa, the ill-advised king of Judea, avail for all. GOD, in reward for his virtuous life, had given to him ten long years of peace, for peace of this country was wont to be a most sweet fruit promised by GOD to kings who were at peace with Him. But that Asa might know, that as GOD Himself is the Giver of peace, so is He equally the arbitrator of victory ; so long and pleasant a serenity, became suddenly disturbed by a fierce cloud of armed men from Ethiopia, who had come to make war against him. The king of Judah grew pale when he arrived in the great valley of Zephathah, when he came to join battle there with the king, his enemy, on seeing the country encumbered with three hundred armed chariots, and ten hundred thousand Ethiopians : a number which would seem incredible, if the Sacred History had not expressed it so plainly : " And there came out against them Zerah, the Ethiopian, with an host of a thousand thousand and three hundred chariots." (2 Chron. xiv. 9.) Nevertheless raising his hands to heaven, and after a short prayer, his breast heaving with lofty military valour, he was the first to advance to the hostile camp : he pressed upon it, he assaulted it, he routed it, and dispersed it, and he returned to Jerusalem in triumph with his hands laden, and with spoil. A victory so miraculous must have rendered the faith in the Great LORD of Hosts to be more firmly established in the soul of this prince. It ought certainly to have done so ; nevertheless hear whether it was so. A year had scarcely passed by since that memorable triumph, when Baasha, king of Israel, roused himself with his troops to disturb

the glorious rest of Judea. And Asa, what did he then? Instead of going to the temple to remind the LORD of his past victory, and to beg of Him a renewal of His mercy, he went there to despoil the treasury, and taking from thence as much gold as he had formerly consecrated to the Divine use, he hastened quickly to Damascus to effect an alliance with Benhadad. A prophet, by name Hanani, hardly knew it, when entering quickly into the palace with that holy and sincere zeal, which in our days would be called temerity—Oh! unhappy king, said he, who has so deprived thee of sense? hast thou dared to make a league with the Syrian? and having still hanging about thy throne the spoils lately seized in the Ethiopian rout, hast thou trusted rather in the help of the idolatrous, than in the favour, already proved, of the Heavenly King? Now indeed thy kingdom will in future be in continual siege by cruel war; ever subject to destruction, to incursions, to rapines, to desolations, to fires, and at the gates themselves of thy palace, thou wilt hear the sound of the war-trumpet which sounds for the battle: “Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy GOD therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.” (2 Chron. xvi. 9.) This, O hearers, yes, this is the true reason why so many lost labours are seen in the world; so many false hopes, and so many vain solicitudes; so much cultivation without fruit, and so great sowing without a harvest: because men have relied, “and not relied on the LORD.” The attainment of posts is usually hoped for from the protection of friends; security of traffic, from the fidelity of correspondents; the cure of diseases, from the skill of the doctors; the victory in law-suits, from the power of the advocate; the establishment

of families, from the advantage of marriage, in which more is now thought of that which brings money, than of that which imposes a burden upon those who are married. It is more thought over to bind a good contract, than to receive a good sacrament : because men have relied “and not relied on the LORD.” But let them alone, says GOD, and I will show, at their expense, how weak and feeble are the foundations upon which they are leaning ; because men have relied “and not relied on the LORD.” I will raise up a rival more powerful than themselves to ravish their office ; an unforeseen misfortune to break their bank ; the death of the first-born to cut off their hopes ; and that dowry itself, which was so envied by many, because by all, it was reputed to be so large, that will be a spark which, falling upon broken hearts, will be the cause of quarrels, of separation, of litigations, which by little and little will consume the family : “Therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.” Oh that I had this morning the authority and the eloquence of the prophet Elijah, who said to so very many who trusted in human means, and who were wholly forgetful of GOD, as if their lots were not held in His hand—“Is it not because,” I would cry, “is it not because there is not a GOD in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron?” (2 Kings i. 3.) Are there not temples in the city, that you languish all day in halls of commerce ? Are there not altars in the temples, that you consume the whole day in the forum ? Wherefore, O Christians ; why is it that before every other thing, you do not fly to the LORD ? Why is it, that you do not pray earnestly to Him, that He may bless from heaven your affairs, your labour, and your dwellings ? For what reason, even in despite of

GOD, do you make idols which cannot save you? idols which have no hands, except to receive that which is given to them by you; idols, which have no eyes, except to see that which is presented to them by you. How often were you yourselves constrained to complain, that there is nothing in this world in which one is able to trust? that infidelity, that intrigue, that dissimulation, are new and profitable arts of our day? Now why at once do you not show your good sense? What extraordinary fascination binds you down to the obsequy of these deceptive divinities? Break, O beloved, an enchantment so subtle; and however much you may regard your temporal interests, and your earthly happiness, abandon yourselves to the bosom of the Divine and loving Providence, as little children to the bosom of their mother: "O cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall nourish thee." (Ps. lv. 23.)

IX.

HABITUAL SIN.

"A certain man was there which had an infirmity thirty and eight years."—S. John v. 5.

BETWEEN the natural infirmities which weigh down the body, and the moral infirmities which oppress the soul, there occurs, my revered brethren, this difference: that to store from the first infirmities,—those of the body—it is not necessary that the sick one should fully understand his state; nay, it often happens that the domestics with great care try to hide it from him, so that the fear of death may not come at the same time with the agitation of the mind, and so increase the malady; whereas in the second infirmities,—those of the soul—it is not possible to effect a cure, if the sick one himself does not recognize the violence of the disease by which he is attacked.

Wherefore S. Prosper, that most wise physician of endangered souls, on this account directed that the evangelical preachers should begin the cure, by showing to the patients the misery to which they are reduced; so that greatly disturbed and terrified by such a spectacle, they may quickly return and seek for the medicine: "This medicine is first exhibited to the sick, that he may begin to know that he fails, and may desire the help of the physi-

cian in order that he may recover." I think, hearers, that I cannot this morning more fittingly undertake the cure of souls habituated to sin, and for thirty-eight, and perhaps more years profoundly buried in its lethargy, than by setting before them as vividly as I am able the state of their souls as being most deplorable. However, if at any other time I have desired attention to my words, I plead for it now most especially and chiefly; since there is no subject that is more important for me to treat of from this place, nor is the subject more applicable to any other people: the cities being now (both the shame and the reproach of Christianity) like so many wretched sheep-pools, in which too many are lying, "a great multitude of impotent folk," of every age, of every condition, of either sex, habituated to vice. Neither shall I esteem my labours to be badly spent, should I even be the means of bringing one only of the so many "impotent folk" to leave his infirmity in the miraculous and penitential waters. Let us begin.

Habitual sin, or, as we should rather express it, the acquired facility of falling frequently into the same sins, is commonly called a chain by the holy Fathers, as by S. Bernard, who writes—"It is a certain grievous habit, and a pernicious chain." It is not without good reason, my brethren, that we show firstly, how by an unhappy soul this habit is contracted by little and little. For just as of many rings continuously inserted the one within the other, and each one insufficient by itself to entangle and to bind down a person, a strong and very heavy chain is formed, which places man in a lasting slavery: in this way, you see that men, by sins continuously committed one after another, become the unhappy fabricators of that

guilty habit, by which the devil holds them bound and tied: "as if by certain links joined together." S. Augustine thus describes the evil habit contracted by himself in the ardent years of his follies: "he was holding me in a hard servitude." An oath, through a stroke of unexpected ill-luck, is an execrable sin I cannot deny, but is not a chain. It would be such, if you, O gamester, were to continuously break out in such transports. A fraud, through an itching for gain, is a most grievous sin without doubt, but nevertheless it is not a chain. It would become so, if you, O bargainer, were to repeat such frauds. A fall, through the ardour of rebellious concupiscence, is a mortal sin doubtless to the soul, but nevertheless it is not a chain. It would quickly be such, O young man, if you frequently accustomed yourself to such practices: "For, when lust is pampered, it becomes a habit," says S. Augustine. But here I should like to remove the mistake of some, who having fallen, through their misfortune, into any sin; either turn voluntarily to danger, or accept without any contest, should the invitation be given to them, or should the occasion be presented of re-falling; saying within themselves that senseless and foolish proposition: since I must appear to be defiled to the eye of the confessor, I will defile myself even more; for any way, it is as bad to be accused of one fault, as of many. Wretched ones! who do not know that by adding sin to sin, they are weaving those meshes from which nevertheless the superhuman power of the priest is able to deliver. As CHRIST spake at the tomb of the dead Lazarus, with that authoritative voice, at which even death, although deaf, trembles and obeys, so He called him out of the sepulchre, where he had lain for many days the food for

vermin. The dead man quickly heard the voice raising his head from the squalor of the ashes, came alive, to console the sisters who were weeping by around the tomb: "And he that was dead came forth" (S. John xi. 44.) But do you reflect, O hearers, in what way he came forth? He came forth bound as he was both the hands and feet; he came forth with the face covered with funeral bands; neither because he was free as he was he free to use either his hands, or his feet, nor his eyes: "Bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin." In this the Gospel S. Augustine discovers that which happens to men in habitual sin: "Such are bound by an evil custom and are buried as Lazarus was." At the sound of the sacramental and divine words, justifying grace returns to them, and I wish now to explain; the soul which was dead through sin, again lives: "They come forth who were dead." But to the words of His ministers, Christ did not give efficacy and strength sufficient to deliver them from those habits, which are the sepulchral bands so to speak of the fatal remains of their past death. These unfortunates "come forth" with their intellects darkened by the very darknesses, which by sinning they gathered round them; they come forth with the will enveloped in the same meshes which were fabricated by repeating the same sins whence neither have they the control of their feet, nor are they able, except with much difficulty to incline towards that which is good: "They revive, but being untorn to life they are not able to walk."

Hence it is, my brethren, hence it is that there is a quick falling away after confession, and that turning again perhaps even in the very same day, to sit

languidly in the filth of their former sepulchre. The effect, O unhappy ones, the effect of that foolish and ignorant maxim—it is as bad to be accused of one fault as of many—is both a mournful and necessary effect. Because “it is a grievous habit and a most pernicious chain.” “A heavy chain,”—a chain so heavy, that it places the soul in such a state of impotency, that it is compelled to fall under the weight which overpowers it. Neither certainly will you find either amongst the gentile Philosophers or the holy Fathers, any writers who would declare, as the first inseparable peculiarity of habitual sin, the moral necessity of falling headlong from sin to sin, even into the abyss. According to the comment which I have made to you upon S. Thomas Aquinas’s words, who defined the sinner to be bound by his guilty habit; (and oh! hear the marvellous evidence of the issue of a course of sin;) the apostle S. Paul defined the habit to be a body of sin: “The body of sin,” (Rom. vi. 6,) since, as the members of the body employ themselves according to the will of the disposing soul, so they have no other movement, no other rule, no other intimate direction, except the soul which governs and rules them with a high dominion. In like manner, O Christians, a man in habitual sin is impelled precisely as he would be by a new soul, and he is continually urged by the sin which domineers over him: “The body of sin.” Give me a man habituated to avarice; every movement of his hands is a theft; every invention of his mind is an intrigue; every wish of his heart is either a desire for another’s property, or envy at the fortune of another. In short, he adapts all things to the genius of interest. “The body of sin.” Give me a man habituated to lust: if he thinks, his thoughts are defiled; if he loves, his loves are

sensual ; if he hates, his hatreds are rivalries ; if he hopes, his hopes are now to persuade by courting, now to prevail by applying himself ardently to the constancy of another. He takes heed, but only to find food as an incentive to his passion ; he walks, but only to go to the house of his intriguer ; he speaks, but only to imbue others with the sin of his filthy and obscene jests. In short, he makes use of all things according to the genius of sensuality—"The body of sin." Therefore I do not hesitate to affirm, that as the operations of the body are not immediately free in themselves, but are only so in the soul, which is the governing power ; it often happens too, that the habit of sin is exalted to such dominion, and such power is acquired over the habituated one, that his sins are not now voluntary, except in so far as the habit is voluntary, which rules him with so despotic a power. According to the authoritative testimony of S. Augustine, which wonderfully confirms my statement, "deservedly also, he is drawn unwillingly into that state into which willingly he has fallen as into a habit." He not only confirms it by word, but by the example of his dissolute early life. Feeling myself, as the saint confesses that he felt when he was gone astray, feeling myself drawn with violence to commit those sins, from which, nevertheless, the mind turned away, and of which I had a horror. What sighs I sent from my harassed heart, and how many tears I shed over the cruel chain which I had bound about me ! "I was living bound, not with a foreign chain, but by my own iron will." But although I was sighing, stubborn, and fearful, still the devil was leading me along the downward road just as a restive horse is led by the bridle : "My enemy was holding me willingly, and he

had fettered me." Poor habitual sinners! Alas! how many times even you would desire to abstain from certain sins, which, if you could see it, are the destruction not only of your soul, but also of your substance, and of your body.

How many are found in our day who are, if not "a hundred years old," as Anastasius Sinaita marvellously attests there were some in his day, certainly grey-headed, aged, and enfeebled, "trembling in their whole body," through length of life; and through a continual course of dissipation paralyzed in their members, who would wish at last to abstain from wine, from the gaming-table, from sensual gratification, "and they are not able," because the habit, tyrannizing over them, compels them, torments them, and urges them on: "they are not able on account of daily habit."

But you, happy in your sin would you be, you fortunate ones! if you should weep, as S. Augustine did, over the hard necessity, in which your guilty habit of evil-doing throws you. That would be a favourable presage of liberty. The worst feature in the case is, that from an inveterate habit, naturally follows a second consequence more sinful; which denotes the contempt of the very sin: "Contempt springs from habit, and by how much the more willingly any one sinning, by so much the more desperately is he carried with his whole force down to perdition," as the holy Abbot of Clairvaux, S. Bernard, acutely observed. Do you know what effects the recent sinner experiences in himself, whilst as yet the mind is unaccustomed to the yoke of impiety? No sooner is the wicked thought presented to his mind, than his whole conscience is placed in a state of tumult. Shame quickly

expresses in his countenance, the repugnance of his heart ; and his heart again much more demands satisfaction for the shame of his countenance. Although slowly, and as if unwillingly, still he takes a step in order to retreat, or at least he does not yield so quickly to the suggestion of sin. If this flatters him that there is something sweet in sin, in the same moment, that alarms him that there is something base in sin. He proves to have an internal conflict, which draws the affections contrary ways ; and if the sadder affections prevail, by the cooling of the passion, the pain of the wound is ever more aggravated.' In short he sins with some fear, he sins with some disquietude, he sins with some remorse, he sins with some sense of sin. But the guilty habit little by little destroys all feelings so delicate ; it renders the sinner bold, it renders him venturesome, and so contemptuous, that he laughs to scorn his very disorders : " When sins pass into a habit, they are believed either to be small, or to be nothing," writes S. Augustine. In this case, it happens as S. Clement of Rome observed, that it happens to those who, being accustomed to the land, go for the first time to travel on the sea. The inexperienced passenger has scarcely left the shore, before the agitation of the waves communicating itself through his veins, he quickly begins to experience increasing nausea, and rapidly succeeding giddiness. At the rolling of the vessel, the timid one catches hold quickly of anything that comes in his way. Alas, if the vessel rolls larboard or starboard ! He makes vows and supplications to GOD, as if everything was about to swallow him up ; the groaning of every shroud ; the creaking of every yard ; the rattling of every pulley ; the scraping of every sandbank, terrify him. At this place he fears a

at that place he fears a shallow or reef, and there, a wreck. But give him a little time that he may become somewhat accustomed to his life upon the waters. He becomes used to the tides, to the storms, to the winds, to the dangers, and to the currents. He resigns his ancient fears, the one after the other : he derides foolish, those passengers who are fearful ; he jests gaily with the mariners ; he plays, he sings, he amuses himself ; he becomes so bold, that in the midst of the whistling north wind, he sits down under cover to take repose. Thus, you may imagine it to become in our case ; at first the soul is unaccustomed to commit sin, its transgressions awaken in it a great dread, and the sins appear hard and difficult to bear : and it longs to disburden itself at the feet of a priest. But if in course of time the sins become a habit, is it not true, O hearers, that the soul loses all dread of them ; that she familiarizes herself with the dangers ; that she despises the very dangers that are pleasing to her ? This is most true, as God says by the mouth of Solomon : " When the wicked shall come into the abyss, he will despise." (Prov. xviii. vulg.) For a man to sin contemptuously, I demand that he should drink iniquity as it were water ; that is to say, without any shuddering as to the consequences. For a man to sin contemptuously, I demand that he should not regard the number of his sins, but that he should treat them as if they were of no moment ; that he should intentionally assume libertinism, burlesquing every practice of piety, and opposing every maxim of religion ; that he should scorn those who fear God, and speak of them as being a poor spirit, and ever clogged with infantile prejudices ; that he should make a boast of, and glory in, his

having violated all the laws of outward morality. Such an one sins through distaste of justice, according to St. Augustine, and through greediness after every kind of wickedness.

Such sin as this, by Hosea, was called a depth: "They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah." (Hos. ix. 9.) And this cannot be more clearly demonstrated than by this circumstance, viz. the length of shameless imprudence to which men are led by habitual sin. I will narrate it, hearers, with all the brevity, and, at the same time, with all the respect which is due to modest ears. It was towards the setting of the sun, when a certain young Ephraimite arrived in Gibeah and he had with him his concubine, whom he was leading from the house of her father to his own land. They were received kindly at the house of a charitable and compassionate old man, where they frugally supped with him; they both refreshed themselves after the wearisome journey of the day. And then, behold a band of libertines who had quickly eyed that young stranger; behold then I say, surrounding the house on every side, and violently knocking at the door, asking for that to which their unnatural and most violent incontinence incited them. The host, horrified at such a request, and able neither by reason nor by entreaty to move the Gibeaites from the brutal demand, was constrained to descend to an unworthy compact, and to sacrifice the woman to save the man. That which followed within the shades of the night, modesty consigns to the tomb of darkness. Nevertheless, so great was their rashness, that instead of acknowledging the excess of their crime, they armed themselves for the defence of an outrage of which the like was

never seen, either in the woods or in the sheep-fold. To so great temerity reach habitual sinners, that they dare things which are signally wicked and abominable: "And then," says S. Augustine, "they become the defenders of their own evil deeds." They pretend to justify their conduct, the conduct of their life, which is certainly most heinous; they desire that their vices even, should be held in some respect; nor do they suffer any one to speak of them, except perchance in the way of adulation: they are enraged against him who reproves them: "They are angry when they are reproved;" and if any one through zeal for their salvation, kindly exhorts them to change their mode of life, being brutalized, they answer as the inhabitants of vituperous Sodom answered Lot: "This fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge." (Gen. xix. 9.) This, yes this, is that which the confessors and the most zealous ministers of the Gospel obtain from those; they are either ridiculed by them as fools, or they are decried by some as being indiscreet. From which it appears, brethren, how difficult and arduous is the repentance of these miserable ones. Concupiscence having gained the sway, so subjects the reason, that it never thinks to cast away the habit. Nay more, it is not even in a state to conceive thoughts of liberty. To this end it would be necessary, that reason should recognize the abyss of its wretchedness, and that it should perceive the ill-odour of its sins. It would be necessary for it to remember GOD, His anger, and His fearful judgments; but, as S. Bernard says, the habitual sinner neither knows himself, nor calls GOD to mind: "Swallowed up in a vortex of vices, he is unmindful both of his own reason and of divine fear." On the other hand, rather than hear

with patience those who could enlighten him and make him wise, he impiously laughs at them as at mere zealots, who professionally declaim, and he resembles the malicious asp which shuts its ears to the enchantment, lest it should cast away its venom.

Moreover, to lead such as these from their error, what motive can be adduced, demands S. Augustine, that will avail? Hope? Certainly not; for, "they hope according as they may sin." Fear? No indeed; because, "they despair according as they sin." (In Ps. 45.) However, amplify to them the Divine mercy, that it glories rather in pardoning those who are very wretched; that it expects them in due time, and that it gathers the sinners into its bosom; that it is never satiated in showing pity to him, who after any fault, seeks it with a contrite heart. Then we can, they conclude, we can live after the lust of our appetite; GOD will be ever ready to pardon us: "They hope in proportion as they sin." Unfold to them the rigour of justice, that it turns its face away from sinners: that for one fault alone, it has condemned many to the devouring flames; that it has placed an inscrutable limit, which when passed, clemency has no further reign. Then, they add, then let us make haste to enjoy ourselves whilst we have time; for after death, who knows what will become of us? "They despair according as they sin." If they listen to any one who points out the way of salvation as being easy, they feign it to be more easy: "And they hope according as they sin." If they listen to any one who points out the narrowness of the gate of Paradise, they apprehend it to be more straitened: "And they despair according as they sin." Oh miserable and deplorable state! in which the two great powers equally

urge on to damnation. Mercy and justice, which raises from earth, and guides men to salvation: "They hope according as they sin; they despair according as they sin." A state of which S. Augustine truly said, that he who lies there buried, can now be considered to be in a desperate one: "A deed changed into a habit becomes, as it is said, a certain desperation: it is a four-day one; now he stinketh."

And certainly, the sincere conversion of a soul in a state of habitual sin, if ever it happened, ought to occasion a wonder nothing less than that which the resurrection of Lazarus, who had been dead four days, formerly awakened in the multitude. Let it not be to you, O hearers, wearisome to return to the tomb of the dead man, whither S. Augustine guides us, in order to discover a hidden meaning which is worthy of your entire meditation. As is recorded in the Gospel, the SAVIOUR raised three dead to life. He raised the little daughter of a ruler in Jerusalem. He raised the son of a widow near Nain. He raised the brother of Martha and Mary in Bethany. Resurrections, all three in themselves miraculous; but more stupendous by the manner adopted by JESUS CHRIST in raising them. Observe. He approached the bier of the child, and by a gentle touch of the hand restored her to life; "Took her by the hand, and the maid arose," (S. Matth. ix. 25,) as if He had not brought to life one that was dead, but raised up one that was fallen. He stops the litter of the young man, whom He restores by His voice alone: "Young man, I say unto thee, arise," (S. Luke vii. 14,) as if He had not reanimated one that was dead, but awakened one that was sleeping. Whereas on the contrary, when He wished to raise Lazarus, mark the great preparation. He

assembled the Apostles, and makes known to them the call into Bethany, in order there to perform those things which were mighty, and the demonstrators of His omnipotence. Scarcely arrived at the village, He demands immediately the place where they had laid the dead. At the sight of the cold tomb He is troubled, His countenance grows pale; He emits sighs; He breaks forth into tears; He lifts His humid eyes to heaven, and sends an ardent prayer to the Eternal FATHER. Then with a strong voice, which the Evangelist for the sake of emphasis called loud, to the utter confusion of the spectators, He calls him from the darkness and the sepulchre: "He cried with a loud voice: Lazarus, come forth." (S. John xi. 43.) In the different means which the SAVIOUR used to bring to life the three who were dead, S. Augustine recognizes the different economy which is used to convert three kinds of sinners: "These three kinds of dead persons, are three kinds of sinners." The little daughter of Jairus had indeed already expired, but the corpse had not gone from the domestic hearth: "She was within, in the house, she had not yet been carried out from the secrecy of its walls into public view." Such is the sinner who has inwardly consented to sin, but has not yet consummated it externally by the outward act. In order to quicken him to grace, it is sufficient that the good LORD should touch his heart with some inward remorse. "The heart revives in the secret of the thoughts." The young man of Nain was already removed from the house, but was not yet committed to the ground for corruption: "He had been carried out of the walls, but not committed to the ground." Such is the sinner, who outwardly has consummated the sin, but is not yet accustomed to do evil. In order to

recall him to life, it is sufficient that the good LORD should lead him to hear a zealous preacher: "Aroused by the word of truth he rises again at the voice of CHRIST, and is restored alive." But one habituated to sin, he is a buried worm, eaten and corrupt; "Whom the weight of habit presses as if buried." Something else is wanted besides the touch of an ordinary inspiration. Something else beside the thunder of the Evangelical word! The groans, the troublings, the tears, the exhortations, and the cries of a Man-GOD: "There is need of great clamour of renouncement for those who have become hardened by habit." And may GOD grant that they shall suffice in so great a need.

Certain at least it is, that they did not suffice to soften the hardness of Judas. What did not CHRIST do? What did He not attempt? What did He not say, in order to convert the disciple habituated to avarice? But all in vain. That one, diabolically obstinate, scorned the invitations, disregarded the threatenings, gave up all hopes of salvation: "And falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst." (Acts i. 18.) Behold, O sinners! where your cursed habit finally draws you. It renders insufficient the most chosen mercies; it makes you insensible to the things of conscience; it makes you turn away from the light; it makes you insensible to the inspiration of the Spirit; it causes you to grow more impetuously bold amidst flattery; it makes you rage more furiously under chastisements. But if these sometimes throw you back upon yourselves; a life is presented to you so entangled, and filled with every disorder for so many years, that despairing altogether of amendment, you abandon as useless, every thought of salvation, or defer the thought of it

until your last moments : "Desperation becomes, as it is said, a four-day one ; ' now he stinketh.' "

What fruit however can I look for from this sermon ? Not any, certainly, not any ; except Thou, our compassionate SAVIOUR, send me Thy voice at its conclusion. Ah ! if in the number of these my hearers, there may be by chance any who are now beginning to be corrupted by sin, do Thou, most piteous Redeemer, give to my words that wondrous power by which Thou didst arouse Lazarus, who had been dead four days ; that appealing to the conscience of such an one as this, " come forth ; " I wish to cry, even I, to cry " with a loud voice, " " come forth. " Before, through the increase of years, the stink and the corruption increase, which has already begun to emit its odour ; come forth, O young man, from that sin, (thou knowest what) which already begins to weaken thy body with its weight. Come forth, O young woman, from that immodest companionship, which already begins to affect you entirely with its breath. Come forth, O libertine, from that infamous course of life which causes your wife so much anguish. Come forth, O gamester, from that hell, from the effects of which thy despoiled family lament. Come forth, O you, who stand upon the *punctilio*, from those engagements, through which you suffer such restless and unquiet days. Behold that GOD-MAN, Who is troubled in spirit on thy account. See those adorable Wounds, which are aggravated again through grief for thy death. Listen to those lips, which although closed, nevertheless cry, and cry " with a loud voice, " " Come forth. "

SECOND PART.

ough the holy Fathers consider it to be a very ; thing for a man to free himself from habitual sin, habitual sinners, I do not wish to set this before a morning, as if it were an impossible task : “ to through habit is manifestly very difficult,” so said justine, who was for some time in your own state. a man can overcome habit itself, GOD being his and helper, if he does not fear the Christian war- he does not forsake his profession.” Beautiful

by which the learned Father, both comforts you hope, excites you to the endeavour, and at the me points out to you three means, which are effi- means, since they are necessary to deliver you lavery. “ If any one does not abandon himself,” the first ; “ If any one does not stand in awe of ristian warfare,” behold the second ; “ GOD being der to help,” behold the third. To explain them r and with brevity.

ould be certainly a most grievous mistake, if any should imagine that this hard chain should in the e of ages be consumed by rust, and fall from off ck ; under those circumstances he might expect an osening from the amelioration of years. Alas ! he ot fear that chain, with its rust, the teeth of greedy nay, rather, he ignores its power of strengthening of deepening itself, and of enfleshing itself even to ne. “ His bones are full of the sin of his youth, shall lie down with him in the dust.” (Job xx. 11.) ecessary therefore to have resolution ;—labour and

industry are needed. And it is necessary the more to take the file in hand, and to set to work before more of it is welded. I said advisedly to take the file in hand, because the error would be very gross, if you could conceive it to be cut as a cord can be, with one stroke only. No, habitual sinners, S. Bernard seasonably advises you: "It is a certain grave habit and pernicious chain, and is more easily dissolved than broken." And it is really necessary that you should address yourself to the undertaking with a will, at once courageous, resolute, and energetic, as if you meant to break it with one blow. Yet you cannot break it so quickly, it will be necessary to melt it. A confession, although sorrowful and sincere, if it suffice to cancel the sins, will not suffice to destroy the sinful habit. A spiritual conference, although lengthy and carried on with a learned and practical director, will not suffice; the vigilance and fervours of many days will not suffice. As by little and little the chain is formed, so by little and little the chain is melted. "It is more easily melted than broken." If the violence of the habit again urge you to sin, do not lose heart. Turn quickly to confession, which must be made to a confessor, who is firm, and to whom your state is known and clear. Follow faithfully the instructions of him; read often some book which is meet to penetrate your soul either with the terror of Divine justice, or with the hope of Divine mercy. Make examination of your conscience every evening, renewing in it the resolutions which have been preserved, with a heartfelt detestation for your sins. "Lest you should undo yourselves; courage, O beloved, courage, lest you should undo yourselves."

But if all this should not suffice, "lest through fear,

you should avoid the Christian warfare;" to arms, O Christians! to arms against that spirit of iniquity; and do you know who the first will be to feel the edge of the weapon? The accursed fomentors of your vice; the detestable opportunities of your sin; the outward occasions of guilt which excite you: "Occasion is cut off from us, and the opportunity of flying from sin." I do not know, but you do, and that very well, what are those workshops wherein your fetters are forged, and who may be the Delilahs ever mindful to load you with eternal bonds. Declare war against these, and wage it against them with sword and with fire. As long as you make peace with the dangers, it would be in vain for you to expect to escape from them. If with unconquerable Christian valour you triumph over these, I promise you within a short time entire liberty. But if the danger should be internal, and if your appetite itself should be the unworthy artificer of your fetters, what is to be done? Even this, "you should not avoid the Christian warfare through fear." Fasts, austerities, and charities, these are the weapons which are used in the militia of CHRIST. Be not so delicate that the name alone of penitence terrifies you: "ye shall not avoid through fear." Mortify your flesh and subdue its pride. Let abstinence follow the feasting, occupations idleness, hardships to luxuries. "How much she hath glorified herself and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her." (Apoc. xviii. 7.)

I know, O habitual sinners, that I am asking things which in your present state seem to you as hard to hear as to undertake. Nevertheless you must lift up your cry to that most merciful God, so that He may inspire you

from on high with a strength and courage corresponding to the need. The generous Judith when she had unsheathed the Persian scimiter, and lifted the head of the barbarian by the hair, felt she was losing courage, and that her faint-hearted soul trembled at the dire vengeance. Therefore raising her eyes to the all-knowing heaven, O GOD of our fathers, strengthen in this hour my feminine weakness; strengthen my right hand for the blow, upon which depends the liberty and the deliverance of Thy people. Saying this, she thrust the sword into the fierce Holofernes. So ought you to pray devotedly and fervently, and above all at the time when the temptation assails you and troubles you; "Strengthen me, O LORD GOD, at this hour." (Judith xiii. 7.) Behold, O FATHER of every blessing, and see into what a horrible slavery my infernal enemy has led me. With my sins he has formed all around me a barrier invincible by my strength. For me (he knows) it is quite impossible to lay aside that habit under which I groan and am sore troubled for so long. But when Thou assistest me, "even the habit itself, Thou being my leader and helper, I will overcome." So it is, habitual sinners, that fervent, constant persevering prayer, offered up by a true and sincere heart, that is to say, by one which desires earnestly, and has no fear for the issue, that this prayer must be at length the glorious conqueror over evil habit, this must obtain spiritual diligence for you. "That ye should not lose yourselves," this is the gift of strength; "that ye should not fear the Christian warfare;" and without this, I do not scruple to tell you, dearly beloved, you are irreparably lost.

But do not let any one think that in this sermon I

have intended to speak this morning to habitual sinners only. No, O hearers, for I have endeavoured to reason with those who are not such as these. In showing the almost invincible strength of habitual sin, and the many very painful means that are necessary to overcome it, I have implied that every means should be taken so as not to contract it. I certainly cannot think that in this devout audience there can be any, or if any very few, who like Lazarus have been dead four days; few, who are the inveterate ones "of the four days." Amongst sinners themselves, if there are any here, I rejoice to think that they belong to the same class as the young man of Nain: "he was carried out, but not yet buried." To such as these, however, what ought I to say? That exactly which JESUS said to that young man, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." Arise quickly, arise before the stone, as S. Augustine calls it, before the stone of wicked habit crushes your heart. Confess your sins until you feel remorse at having committed them; root out that affection which is upon the increase; subdue that passion which is not yet, but which affects to be a tyrant. Take care, above all things, take care not to add sin to sin, take care not to form for yourselves insensibly that heavy chain which draws you to the necessity of sin, to the contempt of sin, to the fixed use of sin. And that these are three inseparable peculiarities of habitual sin, I have endeavoured this morning to unfold to you. GOD grant that you may believe it in time, so that you may not have one day to confess it by sad experience.

X.

THE SINNER THE ENEMY OF GOD.

“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.”—S. John xi. 11.

It is a friend of JESUS CHRIST who is sleeping—is it possible for us to imagine any sleep more sweet, more delicious, more calm, more secure? So slept the prophet Elijah under the shadow of his leafy juniper; so also Adam slept still innocent in his blest abode, under the guardianship of the angels who beheld in him the beautiful living copy of the Divine countenance. I know, hearers, that by the sleep which is spoken of in the text recited by me, the death of Lazarus was signified, in these mystical words “Lazarus our friend sleepeth . . . Lazarus is dead.” But to the friends of GOD death itself is a repose, or to speak more truly is a triumph, whence not only a just man, but GOD Himself comes to glorify us: “That the SON of GOD may be glorified in him.” For if then, CHRIST contemplating the tomb where the inanimate corpse lay, bathed His own cheeks with tears; if He sighed, if He groaned, He did it not so much through grief for His dead friend, as out of compassion for sinful souls. According to the interpretation of S. Augustine, the sinning souls were symbolized by

corrupting body ! By Lazarus the sinner is signified. In the mind of the Redeemer an unhappy Christian was presented, one who first grows cold in virtuous works, growing in sloth and languor, falls at last into eternal death. It was over this corpse, that JESUS was led in spirit and burst forth into tears and groans unspeakable. "He was troubled and groaned in the spirit." Adventurous soul ! so much more deplorable than Lazarus himself, for although he was even dead, he was used to be the friend of JESUS CHRIST, whereas thou by thy spiritual death, art become the enemy of thy Lord : "the LORD became his enemy." And in such a case, can a Christian quietly give himself up to take his ease ? Alas too much, says the wonder-stricken prophet Isaiah, alas too much, "they have slept even when full of the indignation of the LORD." (Isa. li. 20.) This enmity with GOD, O hearers, is a different hatred, and is as much more terrible a state than the enmity which arises from spiritual death, one in which the man who is a sinner finds himself fallen ; and which I proceeded to speak of in my sermon, in order to awaken such an one from the sleep in which he has lain buried for a long time. He sleeps full of the indignation of the LORD
 "Go that I may awake him out of sleep !" GOD answers ! that is to say GOD who looks upon man as a violator of His laws ; and as worthy on that account to be the object of hatred and of His vengeance, eternal, and unchangeable. Let us consider the boldness of the sinner, thou wilt perceive by what title and how much right, the offended LORD has to declare Himself his enemy. Moses said to Pharaoh and says, "Suffer the people, after they have been oppressed by you for so many years, to

depart from their slavery; and let them return to the land of their forefathers." So commands that God, Who directs me to be to you a herald of His will, "Thus saith the LORD, Let My people go." (Ex. v. 1.) Having delivered his message, Moses remained silent, expecting what answer would be made by that fierce tyrant. Pharaoh gave the answer, but such as might be expected from the proudest and most impious of men. And who is this thy GOD, to whose commands I ought to listen? "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice?" I neither know Him nor care for Him, nor will I give liberty to this people: "I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go." You shudder, O Christians! at this execrable blasphemy, and you think that GOD, so fearlessly despised by the proud king, had a right motive to discharge upon the cruel man the terrible scourges of His wrath. But you, do you not despise Him in a similar way either by committing sin or by persevering in sin which has been already committed? Yes certainly you do. For that reason, your own conscience as Moses of old, intimates, and cries, and commands. "Thus saith the LORD, thus saith." No, you cannot ignore His venerable and holy precepts. In the same act in which you transgress them, the perturbation, the remorse, the shame, the agitation of the repugnant mind, the motives themselves of grace which contest the fury of the passion, all with one voice warn you and recall to you the words, "Thus saith the LORD," thus He saith, "Let . . . go." Now when a man arrives at such a state of presumption, that by his acts, if not by the language of his lips, he answers boldly, as in fact every one who sins does answer, "I know not the LORD, and I will not let . . . go;" it is this

ctly, which makes him rebel against his GOD, this, which constitutes him an enemy and abominable to GOD, which renders him an object of divine hatred; necessary hatred, infinite hatred, irreconcilable hatred.

Necessary hatred I resume: for as GOD by the substantial holiness of His being, is constrained to hate iniquity, so He is constrained to hate the sinner by whom iniquity is so freely chosen. "But to GOD the wicked and his wickedness are alike hateful," (Wis. xiv. 9,) and for his sin, no less than under the sinner, He declares that He creaks, for sin must creak Him; just as a wagon would when overladen by the labourers; "Behold, I am pressed under you; as a cart is pressed (creaked, I suppose,) that is full of sheaves," (Amos ii. 13.) Correct therefore, O Christians, pray correct this morning, the false idea which the devil has created in you and which fomented in you, of the divine bounty, correct it by the truest just idea that we have from faith, nay, even from the light itself of reason. You think that it becomes necessary because He is good to be at peace with and to pity our crimes. Is it not so? And I say to you, that GOD is angry because He is good, even the highest good and the purest by essence, for that reason especially He must feel an extreme horror for your crimes, and must abominate them, and must destroy them, and avenge them, so that according to the thought of Tertullian; if GOD could cease to hold your sins in hatred, He would certainly cease to be the author of good and consequently He would cease to be that GOD, which He is. "For who is the author of good . . . except He who is the enemy of evil?"

Infinite hatred of sin I add, because as GOD infinitely

values that essential power, which begets in Him the right to command, and in us the obligation to fulfil the commands: so, in accordance with this infinite esteem, GOD detests and hates him who refusing obedience to His sovereign and adorable authority, shakes off the yoke of it, and refuses to submit himself to it. "Thou hast broken the yoke, thou hast said, I will not serve." Masters and great ones of this world, is it not thus, that you esteem even so much more worthy of your anger, a disobedient servant and domestic, in proportion to the rank by which you are distinguished?

Irreconcilable hatred, I say in the third place, because as long as man continues and perseveres in sin, GOD never rests, neither is He able to rest from hating him; not for one moment only. This truly is the only wall of division, which down in hell will separate eternally between GOD and sinners; and this moreover is that wall which in this life, will divide for ever between an outraged GOD and the offending soul as long as it defers to destroy it by a sincere and true conversion, "your iniquities have separated between you and your GOD." (Isa. lix. 2.) Therefore are used those expressions so strong and so fearful, with which the LORD threatens in the Scriptures, now, to close His ears that He may not hear the prayers of sinners; now, to forbid His saints to interfere with their good offices for such as those; now, to study the way in which to reduce them to extreme poverty; now, to laugh at the evils which befall them in the last desolation; now, to veil His countenance so that they are not able to bear even its glances; now, no longer to wish to be their GOD neither wishing to know them for His people, "ye are not My people, and I will not be your GOD." (Hos. i. 9.)

Therefore follows the withdrawal of those lights, and those helps through the want of which, man falls into blindness of soul, into hardness of heart, into loathing of piety, into the portentous insensibility of a condition so miserable and lamentable. "Woe to them when I depart from them." (Hos. ix. 12.) Therefore is that "reprobate mind" of the people, as the apostle calls it, through which it happens, that the soul abandoned to itself and to the carnal desires of its own lust, falls without staying, from sin to sin. Since as long as the sinner continues in sin, he has no right either to expect protection, defence, or salvation, from GOD, but on the contrary, he has positively deserved, that there should be outpoured upon him all the evils and misfortunes which an enemy must expect from an enemy.

Positively deserved, I resume, my Christian brethren, because sin from our first parent, gave GOD the right to involve the human race, in a fatal fulness of bodily and spiritual miseries, so that after a course of a life, painful, anxious, wandering, unstable, illomened; each misery presses on to death, and each one drags down to damnation. Thus the actual sin of each man, gives GOD the right to open again and to pour out those same vessels of His wrath for the chastisement and for the personal destruction of him who commits sin. Enumerate every punishment which is suffered by human kind in this world, every torment, with which sinners are irritated in hell, and each sinner can truly say to himself, "I rendered myself worthy of all this when I by sinning became the enemy of GOD." I cannot acquaint you with a more authentic and more infallible proof of this, than GOD's own words, which for our perpetual terror He has

left recorded in His sacred Deuteronomy. And oh ! that I might repeat them to you this morning, in all their magnitude, and with the wonderful power of that zeal, with which from GOD, Moses spoke them the first time to GOD's people. "If thou shalt dare to violate the commands by Me twice engraved in these two tables, immediately thou wilt become guilty of the most dreadful maledictions howsoever they are." "If thou shalt not hearken to the voice of the LORD thy GOD to do His commandments, all these evils shall come upon thee." (Deut. xxviii. 15.) Cursed thou wilt be in the soul, cursed in the body, cursed in time, and cursed for all eternity. "All these evils shall come upon thee." Wherever thou mayest turn thy step, in the plain, or in the valley, to the town, or to the country, My malediction which is inseparable from thee, will follow thee everywhere. "Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out." This will lie down with thee in thy bed, this will sit down with thee at thy table, this will embitter the most genial amusements. "You will be cursed, cursed." Cursed in thyself, cursed in thy children, and thy descendants; cursed thy cattle, and cursed thy commerce; cursed thy employment; cursed thy undertakings. "All these curses shall come upon thee." Deprived of My favour, deprived of My special assistance, and borne down by My wrath, thou shalt be ever in danger of thy life, to take away which creatures faithful to Me, and ministers of My fury, shall arm themselves. "All these curses shall come upon thee," and even thy life as if hanging before thee.

Thus it is, adds the Psalmist, even he who was inspired by GOD to preach the terrible truth which I strive to

apress in your heart. Follow me, with attention this morning, inasmuch as I do not cite any other proofs in my discourse, save the oracles of that God who alone knows exactly, and who alone can reveal to us, the miserable state in which His enemies find themselves reduced. In that moment, however, says the Psalmist, in which a man vilely falling at the prompting of the evil one, becomes the object of divine hatred, over him quickly falls the formidable divine malediction. "The curse shall come upon him." (Ps. cix. 18.) This is in the manner of a garment, made to distinguish him alone, from the rest of men who are obedient to God; it covers him from his head to his feet; and encloses him on every side. "Let it be unto him as a garment that covereth him and for a girdle wherewith he is girded." This makes him recognised wherever he may roam, immediately as a bold enemy, and a true enemy of the grossly offended God. By so fatal a device, although not perceptible to us now, God's avenging angels immediately recognise him; and exhorting one another to torture him, Behold, they cry, a man who had the boldness to offend, and to raise his hand against our adorable Maker: come let us hasten to get rid of him and to exterminate him. Excommunicated by God, disunited from Him, and separated from His grace, no one will ever be able to snatch him from our hands. God hath forsaken him, persecute him and take him, for there is none to deliver him." You, dearly beloved inner, do not believe us; nevertheless you ought every moment to tremble, much more than those men who from the king of Syria were despatched into Dothan to capture Elisha in that place. (2 Kings vi. 20.)

Those people were smitten in so strange a manner with blindness, that they could not on this account perceive anything at all to be the same which they had seen with open and unclouded eyes. The prophet went forth to meet them, well known to them both by countenance and by reputation; and 'If you wish,' he said to them, 'to imprison Elisha, come with me; come, for I know how to lead you to the place where he is concealed.' They, believing him to be a husbandman of that country, or truly a spy, come to them opportunely to aid their fierce design, without saying more, followed his leading. He drew them on with him into the city of Samaria, a city which was raging with a cruel and implacable war against the Syrians. The fierce soldiery of that citadel pressed quickly on all sides, around the senseless enemies; their swords drawn, their lances lowered, and awaiting the slightest signal from the frowning prophet to annihilate them: "My father, shall I smite them, shall I smite them?" Nothing of this kind did the Syrians hear—nothing of this kind did they see, when Elisha, lifting his hands to heaven, said, "Open, O LORD, the eyes of these men, that they may see." At these words, their former ideas returning, and the deceitful darkness being dissipated, in which they firmly believed themselves to be not far from Dothan, "they saw themselves to be in the midst of Samaria." What heart think you, these poor creatures could have had, when they saw themselves shut up in an enemy's town, between the points of a thousand lances aimed against their lives, and in the midst of the glitterings of a thousand swords, thirsting for their blood? when they perceived, that what they had taken for the trees of an agreeable forest were their enemies, placed in position,

and ready to put them to death: "They perceived themselves to be in the midst of Samaria." Ah! that I might to-day be able to obtain the interior view of the enemies of my LORD. Ah! if repeating it again, as I do this morning zealously, "Open, LORD, their eyes, that they may see," should rekindle suddenly in their souls the pale and truly feeble light of faith, what a fearful spectacle they would see; but how truly profitable for their souls. They would see according to the saying of Eusebius Emisenus: "Innumerable enemies surrounded them, by which they are walled up hither and thither." Those very creatures who now appear to them so placid and so flattering, would then appear to them of quite a different aspect; such as they are these who conspired together truly to their hurt, and to destroy them, "The enemies by which they are here walled up;" enemies who stand about them continually, at midnight and in sleep, in feasting and diversion; to say nothing of the enemies which they bear within themselves, and who are incorporated in their very bodies; enemies, of whom each one asks impatiently of the LORD, "Shall I smite them, shall I smite them?" I know, O hearers, that this, which is pure and Catholic truth, will be scorned as a fervid fancy, especially by those who, according to the saying of the Father and Doctor, S. Augustine, are not accustomed to believe, except by the judgment of their own senses: "They have not eyes, save in the flesh alone." Oh, Immortal God! If you are willing to follow the judgment of your senses alone, remember of how many you have heard who have died unexpectedly; either suffocated by a stream of blood, or poisoned by a serpent, or burned by a thunderbolt; or who have perished by water; or have been burned in the

fire ; or crushed under some ruin ; or thrown down in some horrid precipice to perish, by a horse which rebelled against the known voice of its rider. Can I, in a short discourse, enumerate the strange and unforeseen ways by which so many men from day to day find themselves suddenly snatched away, and exactly at that time too, when they appear to us most vigorous and most robust? These are chances and human adventures, you say. So the Pagans and the unbelieving reason, but the Scriptures attest to us, that with regard to the just, they are taken away by a kind Providence, Who hastens to receive them at the right moment in which they are united to GOD by love, and without their having to drink, drop by drop, the bitter and distasteful cup of death. As regards sinners, they are struck, says St. Thomas Aquinas, by an inexorable and avenging justice, which loosens the bridle and reins of GOD's avenging angels, who are naturally impelled to avenge the outrages done to the Creator : for in each one of the creatures is placed naturally the desire of vindicating the injury of the Creator. In fact, to save Cain from their sharpened fangs, it was necessary that GOD should put a certain sign upon him, at sight of which, they might draw back, and submissively calm their anger. Otherwise, the lions and bears, horses and dogs, both men and animals, would have rushed against him, heaven would have burst forth, and the earth would have opened to swallow him up. However, does it not seem to you, dearly beloved, that the state of that wretched man was very miserable, who was constrained by his fear to wander like a fugitive, to fear continually, and to cry in despair, "Every one that findeth me will slay me?" Pardon me ; more miserable are you, whenever you are in sin ; because you also are

encompassed and entangled by a like Divine malediction ; you are in an equal danger, and you have not an equal dread of the malediction. The creatures of GOD's wrath are breathing vengeance and death against you, who, to use the formula of the Prophet, are crying continually and awaking GOD from the long and deep sleep in which He seems to be lying by His long forbearance, " Let GOD arise, and let His enemies be scattered." (Ps. lxxviii. 1.) And you, hated by GOD ; you, cursed by GOD ; you, placed every moment in the most manifest risk of perishing ; you, whose life is a daily miracle of Divine patience, a patience which makes a contrast to the instinct of GOD's avenging angels ; you, nevertheless are able to amuse yourselves tranquilly, and quietly sleep in such a state. Do ye sleep ? full of the indignation of the LORD, do ye sleep ?

But whom will you fear then, if you do not fear, O Churchman, an offended GOD ? " Fear ye not Me ? saith the LORD." (Jer. v. 22.) ' To an offended man, however little he may partake of My sovereign will and authority, you supplicate ; to him you humiliate yourself, to him you promise satisfaction ; intercessors interfere between you and him, and I, in the mean while, I am the only one forgotten, and the only one not cared for.' " Fear ye not Me ? saith the LORD, fear ye not Me ?" Every other enemy, even if we suppose him to be the most cruel, and the most powerful monarch of the universe, what evil can he do you ? He can confiscate your revenues, he can dismantle your houses, he can by a thousand punishments, and a thousand most atrocious torments take away your life. And then ? And then he has finished. " After that,

then have nothing more that they can do." You may be reduced to ashes, his fury can only avail for his own torment. But GOD offended? But GOD, "after He has finished, has power to cast into hell;" He can now thrust you down into Hell, and there with His unwearied and infinite arm, through all ages He can strike and lacerate you without fearing that you will ever lose the sense of torment, or that you will ever come to fail Him under the scourge. Because where others finish their vengeance, there His begins, or to speak more truly, His increases, and becomes beyond measure more insufferable.

Do you believe these things, dearly beloved? Yes certainly, for the holy religion which you profess constrains you to believe them. I have expounded a condition to you this morning which you cannot deny without denying a revealed truth. But what diabolical magic is this? says S. John Chrysostom; to believe that you are the enemies of GOD by being in sin, and yet to remain in sin so peaceably and for so long a time; "To have fallen indeed is a sin; but after the fall not to have arisen is diabolical." You may adduce a hundred apparent reasons with which to excuse the fault into which you have fallen; you may tell me, that the temptation was so great; you may tell me, that the occasion was unforeseen; you may tell me, that the passion was vehement; you may tell me, that overpowered by the dazzling of the gold, and by the fascination of love, you did not give place to reflection of reason. I pity you this time, although I might easily confound you. But what excuse can you bring forward for remaining in the sin which you have committed, and for not wishing to make your peace with your GOD, after

having outraged Him so unjustly ? No other certainly but a mad and diabolical indifference. "After the fall, not to have arisen is diabolical." Even still more than diabolical, I ought to say, because where the devil through necessity perseveres in sin, being at enmity with GOD ; you persevere in it through choice. He does not reconcile himself to GOD, because he is not able to do so ; you, because you do not wish to be reconciled, and do not wish it while the offended LORD is the first to offer you pardon, and with the sweetest invitations He kindly calls you so often to His breast.

Ah, dearly beloved sinners, I shall close my discourse here, in the last place, with the divine words of Ecclesiasticus, "Have pity on thy own soul," (Ecclus. xxx. 23,) take pity at length on your own soul. Behold, to what a miserable state the unfortunate soul is come. It has no longer the life of grace, it has no longer the fruits of good works, it has no longer strength to desire for itself the recompense of glory in heaven. Hear how it groans under the enormous weight of GOD's avenging wrath, the wrath of that good GOD Who loved it so kindly, in the joyous and blessed days of its innocence, and Who nourished it at His table as a daughter, and reserved for it His kingdom as an inheritance. The miserable soul supplicates you ; to you it recommends itself in its extreme need ; to you, who can in this very day if you only wish it, restore to it both life, and merits, and strength, and all the grace and friendship of GOD. Now then, up, shake yourselves finally and banish the sin far from you. "Rise up." (Ex. xii. 31.)

SECOND PART.

Up to this time I have endeavoured to move the sinner to a sincere and prompt reconciliation with God, by giving him clearly to know the miserable state in which his soul will be brought. But concerning the worldly man, who is little disposed to attend to eternal things, and upon whom the loss of spiritual blessings makes little impression, upon such an one, a sensible and practical impression will have more weight; and of this I have kept the consideration to the last place, as being the completion and seal of the subject. We are continually seeing certain families, who flourishing for a time, and abounding in great riches, through I know not what hidden moth, which secretly gnaws them, becoming little by little broken up, so that at last they fall away to nothing. Their farms are now barren; their commerce fails; their negotiations are ruined; their children perish, and the more they endeavour to maintain themselves, the poorer and more miserable do they become. I believe, O hearers, that a great part of these misfortunes are sent by God in order to perfect His elect in virtue, and to make them know practically that in these temporal goods they must place neither their hearts nor their confidence. The saints, Job and Tobit, so dear to God, on the one hand, on the other, were brought to extreme misery; and they are examples of this, which may serve to comfort fearful souls. But still how many of these strange and fatal misfortunes does He not send to avenge the outrages which are done to Him? If we should wish to trace out the true cause of so many of the calamities which ruin many families, we should find that

perhaps in them is concealed, and perhaps even in the head of the house, some enemy of GOD who draws down from heaven the tremendous malediction which consumes them. "If thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy GOD, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes; all these curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee." (Deut. xxviii. 15.)

A ship laden both with merchandise and with a numerous and valiant crew was sailing from Joppa to Tarshish, the sea had never been more tranquil, nor the breeze more favourable, when there arose, in a moment, so dark a storm, and such a tempest spread itself over the immense water, that the ruler of the vessel gave himself up for lost. Nothing availed for the safety of the ship, taking in the sails, making use of the oars, casting forth the wares, the sacrifices, the vows, nor anything the sailors did sufficed to save the vessel. The thought occurred to the mind of the pilot, that the tempest being so furious, and so unusually raging and indomitable, it might be caused by some enemy of heaven being concealed within the vessel. They cast lots, and the lot was cast. In the hold of the ship lay the wicked Jonah, who, a fugitive from GOD, and disobedient to the command prescribed by Him, was profoundly sleeping during the clashing of the thunders. Being aroused from sleep, and being obliged to give account of himself, "Ah, for me," he said, "and in revenge for my sin, GOD, Who is angry, sends you this tempest." "I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." (Jonah i. 12.)

From this narrative turn to yourselves, O sinners, and considering the infinite disgrace which scourges your house, believe indeed that the lewd and wicked life that

you lead is the sole and true cause of it. Having GOD for an enemy, why seek elsewhere for the mournful source of your woes? He, yes, He releases from His treasury, and sends for your destruction that whirlwind; "He sent out a great wind, and there was a mighty tempest." Have you sick children who have been languishing for a long time upon their bed? Have you a wife both intractable and barren? Have you lost your friends and supporters? Is all your household desolated by those continuous misfortunes which desolate you? Are you saying this morning, turning to your house, "For my sake this great tempest is upon you?" I am he who has caused so great a tempest to arise against you. On my account, are the fears which consume us; on my account, are the lawsuits which devour us; through me, is the loss of that appointment from which we gained civil support; through me, the thick hail and the sterility, and the failing crops, and that poverty so hard to bear to which we are reduced. "For my sake this great tempest is upon you." I am the guilty one, and you bear the penalty of my sins. In vain you weep at the foot of the sacred altars; in vain you weep to your friends and protectors; in vain you tell the religious your calamities in order to obtain help from their pious prayers, whilst you, continuing in sin, live cherishing the anger of an offended GOD. Ah, beloved sinner, with a thought so agonising, can you have the heart to depart from this Church? Can you have the heart to return to your house? Can you have the heart to behold again the family sorrowful on your account which is enduring the scourge? Will it not appear to you that they will behold you with a bitter eye, as the sole author of their punishment? Every sigh which es-

capas their lips, will it not seem to upbraid you for your sins? "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise." And what a slumber, great GOD! is yours in token so tragical and so deadly? "Arise, call upon thy GOD." Arise, arise quickly from a lethargy so profound, and ask here and now pardon from GOD. Purge your sins from your conscience, and submerge them in the waters of a sincere and saving contrition. Remove from the eyes of GOD every incentive to anger and vengeance. Take away from your house the one great cause of misfortunes so fatal and so enduring. "Take them up and cast them into the sea;—and the sea ceased from her raging." Amen.

XI.

GOD'S FATHERLY GOODNESS.

"They bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders."—S. Matth. xxiii. 4.

ALTHOUGH men, according to the saying of holy Job, fallaciously deceived by their pride, believe themselves to be born to genius and to liberty, and like unbroken and undocile colts, are ever seeking to rid themselves of their master; yet these miserable creatures gain nothing by this false belief, save that they more enfeeble themselves the more they strive to resist the bridle and the whip. Since Adam lost that sovereignty with which GOD Himself in creating him had honoured him; a sovereignty not only over the wild beasts of the earth, but over the fierce and proud passions of the soul; the hope of living without control is the vainest hope of his children, to whom, save servitude, he has left nothing as a heritage. But it is a good thing for us, dearly beloved, that in the dire necessity that we are under of being subjects, we have still the liberty left to us of electing for our Master and our Ruler, Whom we will. "Choose," may be said to all, as was formerly said by Joshua to his people: "choose you this day whom ye will serve." (Josh. xxiv. 15.) From

the interest which I take in your welfare, I am come this morning to propose a master to you, than whom, not one in the world can be found more pleasing and more considerate. Since while others rest their greatness in ordering their households with pomp, and in loading them with grievous burdens; "they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders;" this Master, on the contrary, desires to show His greatness in such a way, that His precepts may be sweet, and easy to follow. The good treatment which I have received from Him since I chose Him for my Master, nay, rather, since He chose to elect me to be His servant, the law of gratitude compels me to proclaim, and to testify to the sweetness of His nature. And it will be a good thing for you, in hearing me, you even would resolve, as each one in your state can do, to place yourself absolutely, and to continue steadfastly in His service; since it is certain that having made proof of His rule, you will pronounce him to be highly blessed who serves such a Master: "Blessed be the nation whose GOD is the LORD." (Ps. xxxiii. 12.) Two things, then, according to the idea which I form, occur to constitute a good Master. Firstly, to require a small service; secondly, to reward liberally. Now I am going to show you that the LORD is wonderfully endowed with both these qualities. He commands His servants with discretion: He remunerates them with abundance. These will form two divisions for my sermon; they will offer two motives for your wise election. Let us begin.

In order to speak the truth, I ask, O Christians, where could you find a master, who needing nothing either for himself or for his own profit, will be mindful alone of procuring advantage for, and promoting the interest of

him who serves? "Did I say," the LORD may ask, more reasonably than Job, "Did I say, 'Bring unto Me:' or, 'Give a reward for Me of your substance?'" (Job vi. 22.) Oh! for when I might have hungered, I should not have come to thy threshold to ask bread, neither would it have been necessary to lay charges, and to impose taxes upon your estate. Mark! how many wild beasts there are; how many fish in the waters; how many birds unfolding their wings in the air for flight. By these I could have sumptuously filled Myself without any need of thy offerings. "If I were hungry I would not tell thee: for the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof." (Ps. l. 12.) God, is He alone who can so speak. Wherefore the withdrawing ourselves from His service is nothing short of our fleeing from a FATHER Who nourishes us, to go to a tyrant who will despoil us. All the Elders of Israel were gathered together in Ramah, together with the greater part of the people, who were foolishly enamoured, in order that they might appear like the other nations, to have for themselves a King who should rule over them. They did not cease to ask for one with a great clamour from Samuel, the holy judge and priest: "Make us a king, to judge us like all the nations." (1 Sam. viii. 5.) The holy Prophet, well-nigh stunned by the noise of the demands of the tribes, turning round, and having ascended up the slope of a hill, where he could be heard and seen of all: Israelites, Israelites, he said, are you so satiated with the government of GOD, that you desire to place a man over your heads, and to commit the reins of government to him? Well, be it so; but before you choose, hear, on behalf of that LORD, what I ought to say on behalf of Him from Whom you are now so wickedly turning away. You have

had, until now, a sweet and beneficent and liberal Master, Who dried up the sea in order to give you a free escape from the Egyptian bondage; Who opened the rock to provide water for your thirst; Who rained manna from heaven in order to fully satisfy your hunger; He took up arms for you, reserving nothing of the victory to Himself save the pleasure of having fought with and discomfited your enemies. He has given you, graciously, sweet pastures, fruitful hills, fortified cities, and a land flowing with milk and honey. But quite different will it be, O unhappy people! with the master whom you are demanding with so many cries and so great ardour; "This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you; He will take your sons." He will crave to tear your children from your bosom, whom you will behold compelled to do sore service in arms, or, despoiled of liberty, to remain to guard his person all the day: "He will take your fields, and your vineyards, and oliveyards, even the best of them." And he will turn the gardens into parks; and he will turn into woods, the fields whence you were wont to gather your means of support. He will desire for himself the oliveyards and vineyards, and he will take the tenth of your sheep; he will decimate your choice flocks; that which would be necessary for your proper maintenance, you will see prodigally squandered away by him, in the support of jesters and parasites; you will see his sordid eunuchs who will grandly despise your supplications: "This will be the manner of the king." Now is not this a vivid picture of those, who being wearied of the service of God, seek another master whom they may serve? Ah! if I were able to be by them when they were on the point of rebellion. I should like to cry out, "What are you do-

ing? what are you doing?" Do you desire therefore to withdraw yourself from the Divine service, and as it is too much the general habit—"make us like all the nations"—to adopt the law of the world, and to subjugate yourselves to the dominion of the passions? But have you well considered the consequences of this your most foolish resolution? You are forsaking a FATHER of a disposition most eminently beneficent and merciful—a FATHER! a Master, of Whose gift it was that you have enjoyed all your temporal blessings. He gave you possessions, talents, peace of soul, and contentment. Are you hoping for as much, from the flattering passion which wishes to seduce you? It promises, it is true, a sweet life, a pleasant life, both free and delicious, but "this will be the manner of the king who shall reign over you: he will take your sons:" he will deprive you by little and little of the thought of your children, so that you will no longer pay any regard to their Christian education and to their piety; neither to their advancement and profit in lawful callings. He will desire that the time which belongs to them be spent in gaming, in revels, in intrigues, and in society; "He will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them." He will wish you to squander your resources in useless pursuits; your substance in profitless gifts and vain ostentation: "And ye shall be his servants." This people will find the affections, slaves; the thoughts, slaves; the deeds, slaves; so that they will not be able to gain any quiet, or repose, or liberty: "This will be the manner of the king,"—this the manner.

Perchance I exaggerate, O brethren? No! but rather do I repeat that which daily happens under our own eyes,

—men, neither caring for their house or its employments, through a blind passion, which leads them to follow an idol deprived of sense, which has no heart to love, but hands only, by which to receive and to ravish. Men squander away their every possession in order to maintain this tie which consumes them. Men there are, who consume their years and their health, in order to follow the track of a vapour, which the more it rises the more vain it is. Families, once in great abundance, cheerfully ruined themselves to win the applause of those who were afterwards the very first to deride their poverty. Whereas, on the contrary, show me if you can one single example of any one having come to a last state of destitution from keeping himself faithful and subject to GOD: "Have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." (Ps. xxxvii. 25.) No! for it is never seen, nor will it ever be seen. What folly, therefore, what folly, asks S. Chrysostom, is yours? Are you willingly leaving a Master so good, in order to subjugate yourself to tyrants so unmerciful? Is it not the height of madness to despise a rule so light and so merciful, that you may serve the most cruel tyrant?

But my purpose is to further convince you of this truth from a more exact comparison, between what must be endured in the service of GOD, and what must be suffered in the service of the Devil. Observe! GOD commands us to love our enemies: "Love your enemies." (S. Luke vi. 27.) But how? Does GOD intend that we should therefore admit them to our most strict and intimate confidence, or that we should renounce the right of a prudent and discreet satisfaction? No, hearers, but only that you should cleanse your heart from bitterness, and should demand satisfaction only

through the way of justice. Consider now, whether by so little, the spirit of vengeance can be appeased. God commands charity to the poor: "Give alms." (S. Luke xi. 41.) But of what? Does He intend that on that account you should burden yourself with debts, and that you should ruin your estate? No, beloved, He only commands that to be given away which exceeds the lawful needs of life. Consider, now, if by so little, the spirit of ambition can be satisfied. God commands that your body should be kept in holiness and in purity: "That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour." (1 Thess. iv. 4.) But what? Does he intend that you should abstain on that account from the desire of lawful and holy marriage? Mercenary motives often desire, and not unfrequently command such abstinence: but God teaches you through S. Paul, His Great Apostle, that he who lacks the strength for celibacy, "Let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry." (1 Cor. vii. 36.) Where do you read in the Decalogue that God commands to His servants, nightly vigils, or enduring anxieties, or disgraceful humiliations, or very deep depressions of spirits, or sadnesses, or griefs; all of which the cruel world commands to its greedy, proud, punctilious, and insane lovers? Where do you read it in the Decalogue? It is true, hearers, that CHRIST—when He calls for service in His Gospel—calls us to take the yoke, and to bear the burden: "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." (S. Matth. xi. 29.) But at the same time He tells us that this yoke is sweet to bear, and this burden most light to carry: "For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." In fact, dearly beloved, did you ever mark who are those, whom He invites to His service, and to

His obedience? Note it seriously, observes S. Chrysostom, since it is a matter worthy of remark. He invites the weak; He invites the feeble; He invites the oppressed; He invites the wearied: "Come unto Me, all ye who are wearied and heavy laden." And what master ever was there, who having to provide for his family, would send through the streets of the city, to collect the halt, the hungry, the ragged; those who are wearied and useless for work? GOD is that Master alone, Who will act thus: "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." (S. Luke xiv. 21.) Nevertheless, how easy, we are constrained to say, and how light will be the weight of His law, if He runs after servants whom every other earthly master would discard as useless from his house: "Bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." O woman, who so foolishly wasted your years in serving vanity; now when sprightliness abandons you, your lovers no longer know what to do with you; but that most piteous LORD knows what to do with you; even He, Who enjoins me this morning, to draw you to Himself: "Bring in hither the weak." O prodigal, who consumed your living in the nourishment and pampering of your vices, whom now, when penury oppresses you, the sad world casts from its service: but not so does that most merciful LORD, Who enjoins me again to join you to Himself: "Bring in hither the poor." My beloved sinners, the hard and cruel laws of insatiable and tyrannical appetite have torn you, weakened you, and have rendered themselves wearisome and burdensome to you: "We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity." (Wisd. v. 7.) I hear you truly confessing this in your hearts,

"we are wearied;" but although so languid and un-nerved, the altogether good God does not disdain you, nay He calls you to His bosom, that He may restore you: "come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," (S. Matth. xi. 28;) bear upon your neck the yoke of My law, for in this alone, yea, in this you will find comfort and ease. "I will give you rest, take My yoke upon you."

Neither let this seem to be a paradox, my Christians, since truly every other yoke is a yoke of slavery, whereas the yoke of CHRIST is one of grace and love;—a yoke which adds strength to him who carries it, and renders him lighter by the very bearing of it: "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." (Isa. xl. 29.) A yoke, likened by God Himself to the large wings which an eagle has, and with which it raises itself quickly, mounting up aloft: "They shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run and not be weary." (Isa. xl. 31.) Thou art simple and mistaken, says S. Augustine, if thou imaginest that by despoiling a bird of its feathers thou removest from him a burden which weighs him down: without his weight of plumage thou wouldst see him to languish: deprived of this, thou wouldst see him lie prone. Let him retain, oh! let him retain the weight of his plumage, if thou desirest that he should fly: "This burden is not a weight to one laden, but it is wings to one about to fly." But you are more foolish and deluded, O beloved, if you think that you are lightened of a great burden, when you throw off the most sweet yoke of JESUS CHRIST: "Thou hast broken My yoke: and thou saidst, I will not serve." (Jer. ii. 20, Vulg.) But this morning are you giving glory to God and sin-

cerely confessing it; and has it come to this? Ah: on this account your faces are lowered, and your embittered consciences cry out: "The yoke of my transgressions is bound by His hand; they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck." (Lam. i. 14.) It was then that you began to feel, that which you never did feel, whilst you served GOD faithfully: rancours; wearinesses; sadnesses; remorse; desperation. It was then, that in certain hours of solitude you deeply groaned within your soul: "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when GOD preserved me." (Job xxix. 2.) Who can restore to me those years of inward peace, in which, living to GOD, I did not know what expressed those jealousies which mock me; those hatreds which poison me; nor those loves which torment me; nor those fits of melancholy which render me unbearable to myself? I pity you, my hearers, I pity you. But finally do you wish, really wish to raise yourself from the earth upon which you are lying? Do you wish to recover your lost peace and vigour? Take again that yoke, and resume once more those feathers: "Take the yoke, assume the feathers, and thou wilt not labour."

And now to speak without metaphor: it is only the law of JESUS CHRIST, to which is joined the unction of that grace which sweetens every bitterness—which renders servitude light: of that operative grace which enables us to fulfil all the duties and precepts which GOD prescribes. It was tyrannical inhumanity in Pharaoh to command the children of captive Israel to daily toil at the furnaces; refusing to give them the straw which was necessary for their work: "Go therefore, now, and work, for there shall no straw be given you." (Exod. v. 18.) The Jan-

senists have dared to represent such barbarous cruelty as belonging even to GOD : giving rise thereby to great public lawlessness ; saying, that GOD formed laws which were utterly beyond the strength of man to obey, and that He denies them that grace by which they might be fulfilled : " Certain commands of GOD are impossible even to men who are able and endeavouring to fulfil them : also grace is wanting to them by which they may become possible." Arrogant and bold servants, who are so bold as to reprove the SAVIOUR, like the slothful servant in the Gospel : " Thou art an austere man : thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow." (S. Luke xix. 21.) But reason and faith truly speak to us in another way ; in one less injurious to the LORD, and one less capable of removing the stimulus of conscience from the soul. The Gospel prescribes nothing to be performed, which GOD does not give to each man all-sufficient help to perform ; and as when He commanded the Israelites to leave Egypt for Canaan, He provided all things, so that with two millions of persons, among whom there were so many old men, so many women, so many children, there was not one, even amongst the sick, who was unable to sustain the journey : " There was not one feeble person among their tribes." (Ps. cv. 37.) So He, guiding them by His Divine laws to a country more fertile and more blessed, strengthens their weakness in such a way, that every Christian can say in truth, with the Apostle of the Gentiles : " I can do all things through CHRIST, Who strengtheneth me." (Philip. iv. 13.) If some Divine laws are burdensome in themselves, or the present weakness of our nature is feared, they are not really burdensome when compared with the strength which GOD infuses in us. Oh

when my beloved SAVIOUR, my JESUS, lives in me, He concurs with me in the fulfilment of all that it pleased Him to command me to do. If concupiscence is rebellious, JESUS strives with me to bridle it; if the intellect is darkened, JESUS dispels the darkness with His light; if the will is weakened, JESUS renders it sound by His help. I can do all things in Him, and all alike, in proportion as He commands: "I can do all things through CHRIST Who strengtheneth me."

Truth, plain and undeniable, of which S. Augustine being assured, had the high courage to provoke the LORD to lay upon him new and more difficult precepts, "Command, O LORD, command what Thou wilt." "Although," says the saint, "I am not one of those who as a defence for their licentious living, attribute falsely a victorious desire to their concupiscence, and plead an infinite weakness for their motive, saying, 'I am not able to fulfil that which is commanded, since I am overcome by my concupiscence.'" It is not however because I do not know full well the weakness of my flesh, and the natural prostration of my strength. Youth, by me lost in unhallowed love, and consumed in very loathsome sins, teaches me but too well, how frail I am; but the resurrection which I made from so much mire, and which I made from an impure to a pure life, teaches me likewise, how strong a man becomes, wishing to be true to the grace of GOD. Now therefore, most merciful GOD, do not will in the least to look at what I am; but rather consider what Thou Thyself art. Thou hast just right to command me as Thou pleasest and it is sufficient for me to know that so Thou wilt it, in order to persuade me at once that I can perform it. Oblige me to follow as much as Thy infinite wisdom knows how

to suggest, of what is more arduous, and more hard, since all will be easy to me by the assistance of that grace which ever accompanies Thy commands. In short, I know what a master Thou art ; I know Thy character, Thy disposition, Thy power ; therefore, I place myself in Thy hands unconditionally and unlimitedly. "Command what Thou wilt." Oh generous protest and worthy truly of a Christian heart—a protest, which ought to close the mouths of those unprofitable servants "who frame labour by a law." (Ps. xciii. 20, Vulg.) They complain of every, of the lightest divine command, as of a most grievous burden, and they lament over it. No, dearly beloved, let us not do God the great wrong to believe His yoke to be bitter, and His laws so rigid to practise as the worldly would wish to have it thought. For if by proof already made we can bear a true witness as to how good a Master He is and how easily satisfied,—do not let us do Him the worst wrong of all, the neglecting of Him for other masters, whom we know to be both cruel and unreasonable. Let us boldly protest in the face of all men, of all the world ; that we are willing (whatever others may do) to serve God ; Whose service is the fount, the true fount, the only fount of all earthly and eternal happiness. "Choose you this day whom you will serve : as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Josh. xxiv. 15.)

SECOND PART.

GOD, as has been seen by us, in the first part of this argument, being chary of His commands, it might be suspected that He would be likewise sparing of His rewards.

It is the common wont of men to regulate their pay in proportion to the labour that they demand, and it is beneficial for you workmen if this balance is truly maintained. But this is not the habit of our GOD. "As," according to the saying of S. Jerome, "He imposes commands, not because He has any need of our work, but only as a means whereby He can confer upon us His blessings and His riches ; therefore, He orders something that He may have a reason for remunerating us." So in rendering recompense, He rather regards that which His nature requires of us, than what our service merits at His hands. As a nursing mother, from hour to hour, watching the every look of the restless infant, urges it to partake of its natural nourishment : so, says S. Basil, does GOD act ; that He may have the weak as a treasure in a closed place by themselves, desirous of shedding over us His treasures. By His divine decalogue, as by so many voices, He invites us, He provokes, He solicits, to render us every hour, more deserving and more capable of receiving them. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." (Ps. lxxxi. 11.) Therefore it is, O hearers, that from heaven He continually watches and counts untiringly every act of homage which we yield to Him, every work, every sigh, every step towards heaven—our every action, however small it may be : and even the most hidden desires of the heart ; so that every desire brings its own reward. "But there shall not an hair of your head perish." (S. Luke xxi. 18.)

How many toils are endured in this world, which will remain for ever deprived of their guerdon, since they will never come to the knowledge of those for whose sakes they have been sustained. Behold, hard by Tyre the

army of Nebuchadnezzar, growing grey under the helmet; sweating under weight of the cuirass; now life expiring, in the approaches which are attended with risks, or in the assaults which always prove fatal. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, caused his army to serve a great service against Tyre, every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled. (Ezek. xxix. 18.) And what reward does the army obtain for all this? None at all. "Yet had he no wages, nor his army." Because the monarch, forsooth, mindful only of the pleasures of his court, knew not of the slaughter of his soldiers, nor did he think at all about their being defrauded of their pay, "to serve a great service, yet had he no wages, nor his army." O beggared lovers! how you wear yourselves out all day long, in order to meet the wishes of your idol; losing your valuable time, without any profit. If you only suffered half as much for our most merciful God, how many consolations would He shed into your bosom, and how many tokens of reciprocal love, would He give you! O beggared followers of ambition! how hard you toil all day in order to gain the favour of a man in power, obtaining words only, for your pay? If you toiled as hard to gain the favour of GOD He would hold it as a debt to you to be your defence and your crown. "Prove Me," saith the LORD, dearly beloved Christians, from you at least I can have this joy! prove Me for some time, prove Me, and if I do not fill you with a thousand blessings from heaven, leave Me then and serve others. "Prove Me if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Mal. iii. 10.) Is it possible to conceive of a greater reward than GOD? And GOD Him-

self, wills to be our reward, "I am thy exceeding great reward," (Gen. xv.) thy reward, O young man, for that keeping, with which thou guardest the flower of honesty; thy reward, O rich man, for that love, by which thou didst relieve the wants of the poor; thy reward, O poor man, for that patience with which thou bearest the needs of poverty; thy reward, O afflicted one, for that resignation with which thou didst bear the weight of disgrace; thy reward, O woman, for that caution, by which thou avoidest the vain customs of the perverting age. "I am thy exceeding great reward." Great reward—immeasurably great! eternally great. "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." (S. Matth. xxv. 23.)

Now, O hearers, that I have proved to you the sweet and munificent disposition of such a master; answer Him what He asks you from that cross, Wherefore, when it is in your power, do you serve My enemy rather than Me? I do not remind you of the benefits which were bestowed upon you, creating you when you were not, preserving you when at any time you could have been turned to nothing, and liberating you at very great cost when you were laden in slavery. I demand only, I ask only, what attraction you perceive in the devil, what so greatly displeases you in Me, so that being able according to your will, to choose a master, you prefer to serve him rather than Me. "Wherefore," nevertheless, he can give you only fire as a final reward: I, on the contrary, desire to give you an eternal kingdom. There is no reason why his commands should not be more reasonable and easy than Mine, but I know surely that they are not so, because the wicked one "binds heavy burdens, grievous to be borne but My

yoke is easy and My burden is light." O, why then, do you cast off My yoke which is so light, having the intention of placing your neck under the yoke of him, which however you know by experience is a hard one, "Wherefore, when it is in your power, do you serve My enemy rather than Me?" Ah, my hearers! let us correct a mistake which is so great, and so pernicious to our true advantage; and if we have wasted so many past years, miserably serving our passions: let us spend our lives for the future healthfully serving a master so sweet in His commands and so liberal in His rewards. Amen.

XII.

PRAYER.

"Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping Him and desiring a certain thing of Him."—S. Matth. xx. 20.

THAT most glorious title of Omnipotent which was given by Solomon to the word of GOD, "Thy word is omnipotent," (Wisd. xviii. 15,) the holy fathers and doctors, did not hesitate in the least, to attribute to the word of man itself : to that word, I say, which is commonly called prayer. Not without good cause, O hearers, for it has very often wrought wonders similar to those which I shall have to relate immediately, when speaking about GOD. Prayer dispelled the darkness, and restored the light : it arrested the sun and moon in the midst of their courses : it divided the waters and raised up the sea in a heap ; it called from heaven the rains and the fire ; it But who can recount singly, those most mighty miracles which men accomplished through prayer ? But it is not a question of weaving a panegyric on behalf of prayer, which could be easily done, O Christian, if I undertook in my sermons to please rather than to profit. But it is a question alone with me, of persuading you of its usefulness, and of exciting you to the daily practice of an exercise so holy and

so healthful as that of prayer. Wherefore willingly leaving much of what is beautiful and striking, that you may have heard, at other times about it, I restrain myself under an apostolic simplicity and shall show you only the necessity and efficacy of that prayer which concerns the saving of the soul. Considering then, the tenour of the ordinary supernatural and bountiful providence of God, according to the notion which we form of it in Holy Scripture; I divide the subject into two simple propositions which will form the heads of my sermon and the subject of your instruction. I assert, in the first place, that without the frequent use of holy prayer, it is morally impossible that any man can be saved: and in the second place that with an existent habit of fervent prayer, it is equally impossible that a man can be lost. Two truths, the one involving some terror, and the other, full of sweet comfort, but both the one and the other catholic and uncontroversial, as I shall now proceed to prove.

You must understand clearly, beloved, that I do not speak of mental prayer, or as we might rather call it, of meditation, which, by the great father S. Augustine was defined to be the hidden investigation of hidden truth. Mental prayer leads us to serious and attentive reflection of mind, through which we seek to learn the profoundest truths of the gospel, which as a torch will serve us with light to traverse the blind and deceitful path of life in safety. Let, O worldlings, this be as it pleases you, and you are accustomed to consider it:—an occupation fit for the religious alone, who being separated from this world and its turmoils have all the more time to converse with God. I speak now, rather of that which is rightly called prayer, petition, and which for that reason was rightly called by

S. John Damascene, "an asking of right things from GOD." Petition is a fervent demand for those things of which we stand in need, which is made to GOD; either by the interior soul, or by the exterior lips, both being ruled by the heart, and relating chiefly to the end for which we are made. This prayer, beloved, thus explained is truly that, without the use of which, it is morally impossible that a man can be saved. The continual intimations of our Blessed LORD, the consummator and originator of salvation, clearly establish this; for what is more warmly commended to the apostles in the gospel than prayer? To this, our LORD stimulated them by reproofs; to this, He animated them by promises; to this, He urged them continuously, from their danger of falling into sin did they live without prayer. "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." (S. Mark xiv. 38.) So thus, by His own example, He provoked them every hour; whilst so many times, removing Himself from human habitations, was it not His wont to withdraw into a silent and solitary place; and there with bended knee, a sign of reverence to the eternal FATHER, He watched, praying humbly the entire night. "And continued all night in prayer to GOD." (S. Luke vi. 12.) This duty He so insisted and impressed upon them, that often when they were gathered around Him, He taught them with incredible minuteness, the place, the time, and the rules; the very sentiments and words in which they ought to commend themselves to the FATHER. Yet truly He did not intend that prayer should be forced upon any one in like circumstances, but rather He wished in every possible way to render easy to us, the difficult task of frequent prayer. And thence I draw a proof, a very strong one, in my judgment, to show

the importance and the indispensable necessity of prayer. We see, O hearers, that the most gracious providence has ordained that inasmuch, as a means is greatly needed, to enable us to enter Paradise, in so much is it the easier to perform. Of the divine Sacraments, observe that there is none more necessary than baptism; but is there one which is more readily applied? If we look at the element of the sacrament, it is simple and common water, such as every hill abounds in, even should it be as high as the Alps; if we look at the administrator of it, every person, although poor; a layman, a heretic, a pagan even can confer it validly. It can be fittingly administered, in every place, at all times, in every age. The LORD has decreed the like things of prayer. It is independent of the circumstances and place, since you can commend yourselves to GOD, not in Church alone where His majesty resides as in a royal palace, but at home, or abroad, or in your workshops, or lying upon your beds. The Babylonian youths prayed to GOD from the furnace, and Daniel from the den of his lions, and Manasses from the depth of his prison, and Jonah from the whale, and Job from the dunghill: as S. Chrysostom observed, "Place is not to be sought for, but attention." Prayer does not depend upon the circumstances of time, since you can present your supplications to Him in the morning, at noonday, in the evening, in the silent and sober night, GOD is ever watching, attentive to listen. Prayer does not require elegance of style or sublimity of thought, since GOD chiefly loves the simplicity of the humble, and the coarseness of the poor. "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, [humble, Vulg.] and not despise their prayer." (Ps. cii. 17.)

But this great easiness in praying, if it be a valid argument to show the importance of prayer, is at the same time a reproof to our ordinary and lamentable neglect of it. Oh, if when treating with GOD of the infinite concern of your salvation, you ought, O hearers, as you do with men in minor affairs, to seize hold of the time of being admitted to a hearing, to seek mediators, and to study the preambles to your petitions ; so you ought to leave your own houses, and to seek notwithstanding sanctuaries so renowned. But it is not so, my dearly beloved, oh no ; “The word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.” (Deut. xxx. 14.) “As you are the temple of GOD,” says S. Chrysostom, “so is your heart the altar where He sits, and receives your supplications without any accessories, which same He opens and introduces to the audience.” Is it afar off any place that you should go to ? Wherever you may be, wherever you may call upon GOD, He hears you : there is no need of a doorkeeper, of a mediator, or of an attendant. It was so greatly pleasing to the infinite goodness of GOD, to render a means so necessary, easy to every person.

And the root of this necessity, is clear also to each one to whom are known the weakness and the miserable state in which our fathers involved us when they fell. To remain for a long time far from every sin, and live habitually in favour with GOD without a preparation of special helps and apart from the order of supernatural providence—in no way is possible—it is not possible. Our nature weakened in itself and of itself tending to ruin ; compelled as it is to walk upon the slippery wilds of so many risks ; continually impelled within by passions, without by enemies, visible, those who are flattering us ; invisible

and invincible, the fiery demons which assail us, our nature will not long be able to resist. But still it will be able to sustain itself with the helps alone which are due to us through our right of exaltation. As the council of Trent decrees, "if any has said that a person in a state of justification, is able to continue in acceptable righteousness without the special help of GOD, let him be anathema." Now these helps so valiant; helps without which it is in vain to hope to live in favour with GOD; GOD Himself who is the free dispenser and master of His gifts in His ordinary providence, gives truly only to those who are by Him moved to pray, and who by Him are in like manner moved to humble themselves in supplicating Him. We believe, says S. Thomas Aquinas, that there is no help promised, save to those who seek it in prayer. Why complain indeed of the law of GOD as if placing you in the midst of so many dangers, He may have placed you under the necessity of perishing? Complain of yourselves, says S. Augustine, you who cannot save yourselves, because you will not pray. "GOD," says the saint, "does not bid us do what is impossible, but by commanding us He admonishes us, both to do what we can and to seek from Him the power to do what we cannot do of ourselves." Do you complain of the devil as if he were overstrong for you, so as to conquer you? Complain of yourselves, cried S. Chrysostom, because you arm the devil by disarming yourselves of prayer. S. Chrysostom says that "He furnishes weapons against himself, who does not weary out the enemy by the constancy of his prayers."

Behold in that place, continues the holy Father: that place of the plains of Rephidim; behold there, two armies in hand-to-hand encounter, that of Israel, and that of

Amalek. Victory hovers over them doubtful and unstable; for now the heathen squadrons are broken by the assault of the valourous Israelites, and then, the Hebrews fly from the furious enemy who pursues them closely. But what ever can be the cause of an alternation so marvellous? learn from the Old Testament, where it is related: "And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed." (Exod. xvii. 11.) Moses prays upon the mountain, and the people conquer in the camp; Moses ceases to pray, and the people flee, overcome, discomfited, and routed. The prayers of the Great Prophet are as thunderbolts, which break, and beat down the hostile armies; but his silence is a whetstone on which the Amalekites sharpen the swords and the lances: "The Christian may learn from this, whence either he conquers, or he is overcome." Your enemies subject you to your senses; you, to hatred; you, to covetousness; you, to pride; you, to debauchery; you, to greediness. Do you know what is the cause of this? Because you do not lift up your hands in prayer to heaven; because, in your temptations, you do not commend yourselves to the LORD; because you do not anxiously demand from Him His holy help. Your boundless sloth and your mournful dumbness; these, yes these furnish to the devil the arms with which he can fight against you: "He furnishes weapons against himself, who does not weary out the enemy by the constancy of his prayers." If at the sun rising, and at its setting, or at noonday, frequently in midst of works and employment, with humility and confidence you said to God, "Thou wilt never suffer me to be separated from Thee." My beloved one, send me a thousand thousand

deaths, rather than permit me to sin even once : if in that bold assault of the tempter you cried with David to God, "Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help." (Ps. xxxv. 2.) Ah, my LORD, gird me with Thy strength, and cover me under the wings of Thy defence ; under this impenetrable shield, all the darts of the infernal adversary will be blunted. You do not arm yourself for defence, therefore vice triumphs without opposition : "The Christian may learn whence he is overcome. He furnishes weapons against himself, who does not weary out the enemy by the constancy of his prayers."

But what shall I say of our present nature so weakened and so powerless, if the holy Pope, Gelasius, speaking of our first parents, who were not agitated by the waves of passion, and who were adorned and furnished with choice gifts, did not know how to ascribe their fall, save to the need of prayer. That first wholeness of condition—whilst it trusted too implicitly in itself, and neither asked nor received that divine help, which is so necessary for its preservation—destitute of the guardianship of the Creator, yielded to the snares of the deceiver. From which I infer, that in whatever state—be it one of an innocent, or of a vitiated nature—grace was necessary, inasmuch even as prayer is necessary for our salvation. This is not my opinion only, but also of those many Fathers who formerly wrote against the Pelagian heresy, which denied that prayer was necessary to salvation, asserting that to obtain it, the strength of nature alone was sufficient. Would to God that an error, already withered and conquered by so many anathemas, was now extinct ; but alas, indeed it lives practically in the hearts of those Christians who expect to receive salvation, while they care so little to ask

for it. Undeceive yourselves, O wretched ones; if you have to gain heaven, prayer is the way. It was for this cause that CHRIST, having to choose the place whence He should return victorious to the eternal kingdom, chose neither Bethlehem, where He was born: nor Tabor, where He was transfigured; nor the most holy Calvary, where He finished the great work laid upon Him by the FATHER, but He chose Olivet: yes, my beloved, Olivet, the ordinary faithful recipient of His long prayers, as if He wished to signify by this, that prayer is the road by which we must ascend to reign with GOD. And certainly that last precious help, which after the stormy navigation of this life guides us into port; that gift elect and crown of all gifts which accomplishes and assures all the others,—the gift of final perseverance—cannot be expected, save from prayer. To obtain this, neither fasts, nor the austerities of a penitential life, passed for a long time in sackcloth and ashes, suffice; except inasmuch as such pious exercises are animated and strengthened by the constant use of prayer. Prayer is the anchor to which GOD wills that we should secure our vessel in the midst of the swelling tempests of this age: “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of Man.” (S. Luke xxi. 36.) That these things are so, (to conclude in the words of a great Theologian) “they show not only the profit but also the necessity of prayer; the most urgent need that there is of it.” It is very urgent for the just to persevere in good, but it is much more urgent for the guilty ever to rise from sin.

For the just, being sons of GOD, have in their very sonship, a great title, by which they can hope for defence and deliverance from the FATHER. But you, O unhappy

sinners, can say with all truth, that which the destroyed king of Idumea once cried as a type of you : " I am escaped with the skin of my teeth." (Job xix. 20.) This is the one cause which has left sin—a most fatal spoil of every other good—the lips alone to pray for mercy and to demand pity from our God. I am escaped with the skin of my teeth, i.e., by means of my lips. I have read the Gospel many times, and I have sought to find that JESUS CHRIST ever rendered to any one wholeness before it was earnestly demanded by the needy themselves. He expels the darkness from the eyes of the blind man, but that only when the latter with loud cries had demanded, " JESUS, Son of David, have mercy on me." (S. Mark x. 47.) He cleanses a leprous man, decayed in flesh, but that was only when the latter had besought him with plaintive voice for help : " LORD, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." (S. Luke v. 12.) He restores to health, at the edge of the sheep-pool, the paralytic, but not until the latter had sorrowfully unfolded his misery : " Sir, I have no man." (S. John v. 7.) And so one might go on narrating all the rest of the miracles, earnestly seeking that sinners should understand, that if they desire the cure for their manifold sickness, and for the great danger of their souls, they must pray to Him with tears and sighs. What happened to our LORD and the Samaritan woman is an illustration of this. Hear me attentively, although the history is well known to each one, and it was heard from the Gospel for the day ; yet all will not have drawn from it a useful and worthy lesson. He was sitting at that well whence the woman was in the habit of drawing water, and resting there like a weary hunter, " being wearied with His journey," (S. John iv. 6,) looking

for his prey, at the ford : heated, not so much by the heat of the season, as by the desire to subdue that perverted soul. The sun was well nigh at its height. Behold the polluted harlot, bringing the water pot upon her head, is coming from the neighbouring village, whom He addressed at the well. Now then, O JESUS, reprove this woman for her bad life : throw in the face of the adulteress the dust of her sins, so that she may hate herself : infuse into her the grace of contrition, so to raise in her the desire to weep for the many flagrant sins she had committed. Thus could JESUS have done, but such was not His pleasure ; for in this instance He wished to show very plainly the ordinary course of conversion in a sinful soul. Wherefore at the onset He skilfully suggested—do you know what?—that she should pray : “ If thou knewest the gift of GOD . . . thou wouldst have asked of Him ;” and because the woman did not arrive at the understanding either of the most beautiful lineaments of grace, or of the mysterious words of the SAVIOUR, He stayed with infinite condescension to clear her doubts, and to unravel the objections which the poor woman had advanced, until, working with her inwardly, He inspired her to ask, and she immediately broke out in that brief but fervid petition : “ LORD, give me this water.” Then it was that the Redeemer, lastly opening the vein of her tears, shed so much healing and soothing water into her bosom, that all her pollution being cleansed in one moment, she was rendered not only pure, but a very zealous apostle of His glory, according to the beautiful reflection of S. Bernard. Wishing to infuse grace, He demanded prayer from her when He said, “ If thou knewest the gift of GOD . . . thou wouldst have asked of Him.” Now.

these, my beloved sinner, are the traces and the arts with which God, in our days, beguiles you. He has been expecting you for many years, being thirsty for your tears, and desirous of giving you those holy waters, with which you may wash away so great pollution: "Therefore will the LORD wait that He may be gracious unto you." He invites you to ask Him by His secret inspirations: "come ye to the waters;" "ask and ye shall have." But do not believe for all that, that He will ever give them to you, if you do not cry to Him, and cry too, with the desire of being heard, and cry also from the inmost recesses of your heart: "Give me this water," "give me this water." Thou shouldst cry, O unchaste one, if thou wishest that He should wash away so many disgusting filthinesses of sense: LORD, "give me this water." Thou shouldst cry, O angry one, if thou wishest Him to quench so many flames of implacable wrath, LORD, "give me this water." Thou shouldst cry, O covetous one, if thou wishest that He should extinguish that thirst for possession which is so strong. And all you sinful men and women, at those adorable wounds—at those fountains of grace, you ought to weep, cry, and supplicate, until the heavens, which were rendered of bronze by your sins, you may soften with pity: "wishing to infuse grace, He demands prayer from you—prayer."

And therefore it happens, that none can withdraw themselves from prayer with that vain excuse by which so many defend their sloth, viz., that they do not know how or what to ask. Providence has ordained, says S. Chrysostom, that so great crowds of wretched ones, and of beggars should lie near the gates of the churches, so that sinners coming to the temple may learn to recommend

themselves by these : " There are before the eyes of those who are entering church, the dumb, the poor, the blind, the lame . . . that you may be instructed from the sight of these." They show you their ragged garments, and sometimes even their naked flesh, the countenance pallid with hunger, and their members eaten away by ulcers ; they tell you the deplorable history of their woes, and they cry for pity, mercy, and relief by the most holy things of heaven. Now why, dearly beloved, do not you know to do as much, in order to obtain pity from GOD, as these poor ones do, in order to obtain charity from you ? Why do you not humbly throw yourselves at the feet of that GOD so abundant in mercy, and piteously showing Him your spiritual nakedness, and the wounds now corrupt of your soul, do you not pray ? " Incline Thine ear unto me and save me." Why do you not say to that Redeemer, GOD, I am a poor blind one so darkened by passion, that I do not perceive whither I wander. " O LORD, that I may see," illumine, O LORD, so that I may turn my feet at once upon the right path of salvation. I am an unhappy leper so corrupted by my sensuality as to cause nausea to myself. " O LORD, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean." Ah, LORD, purge me from so great defilement, I am a miserably dropsical one who is every day distended with pride ; I am a wretched cripple, who, being scarcely raised from evil, falls back into worse sin ; I am a miserable feverish one, and my fever is love, is anger, is covetousness, " O JESU, Son of David, have mercy on me." No ! do not say, O sinners, that you do not know how to pray : say rather, that you love your diseases ; say that dissipated and diffused by the flattering objects which bewitch you, like poor ones oppressed by heavy sleep,

and like those infirm ones who have fallen into a lethargic death, you neither feel your misery nor your evils. But awake this morning, and learning the necessity in which you are, of asking assistance, say before anything else, with a devout and contrite heart, "LORD, teach us to pray." O most piteous GOD, teach us to pray : "Teach us to pray."

But some one will say, How can I pray, if from morn till eve I am so full of business that I can scarcely find time to take breath ? O Christians, I was imagining that your time was given to you, to work out your own salvation in. I was imagining that your chiefest concern, was the saving of the soul, and on that account I prepared myself by so much study, to persuade you this morning by my sermon, to the frequent and earnest use of prayer, for I know that without it you could not be brought to a happy end. But tell me, do you not know in the midst of your cares and occupations, how to find many hours to waste foolishly in walking, in gaming, in a theatre, in chit-chat, in revels ? What man was more occupied with worldly concerns than holy David ; having but just discomfited the giant he was hunted to death by his own king ; it was necessary for him to betake himself to flight, and roaming through the forests to seek caves in which to secrete himself by day, seek a place of refuge into which to escape by night. Made monarch of Israel, the provinces rebelled against him and he had immediately to plan how to enlist the militia ; to prepare food for them ; to garrison fortresses ; to hold councils ; to elect captains. At length the rebels being subdued, rebellions arise in his own house. The son arms himself against the father ;—behold them at war even—the insolent parricide, with all the picked company

of his soldiers, threatens Jerusalem : it is necessary to abandon the kingdom and to throw himself upon rocks and into woods at the leading of fate. Now oppressed by the arms of the valiant Joab, and the perfidious son being slain, he was weeping over a victory contaminated by the blood of his firstborn. But the sighs of an afflicted parent are soon interrupted by other war blasts challenging the battle. Sheba unfurls his banner against his king and draws on his side all Israel to the battle. Wars are ended, but cares remain. David beholds his kingdom wasted by a most destructive famine ; and this was barely ended ere a most sad pestilence broke out, enemies more formidable than war. Yet in so great vicissitude of fortune, in so great disorders in his kingdom, amidst the dust of so many wars, and amidst the horrors and grief of so many devastations, David found time for prayer which seven times daily he presented to God. Mark it, O hearers, although your affairs may be manifold, one is indeed the most important and most necessary, "One thing is needful." (S. Luke x. 42.) A thing which comes to nought without prayer as we have already seen : a thing which is secured by prayer as we shall see directly.

SECOND PART.

When I expressed, beloved, in the second place, that where the frequent use of devout prayer exists, it is absolutely impossible for a man to be lost, I did not regard that efficacy of prayer which is called intrinsic and essential. Although prayer may possess natural virtue to move the soul of another, to confer upon us the good we seek for,

still it leaves the giver free ; nor does it bind him by itself, to infallibly hear us : I regard the other quality of prayer which by the schools and the fathers was called *extrinsic*, like that which rises to prayer from the promises made to us by the Redeemer. Promises, says S. Augustine, great and immutable, by which it has pleased the Highest One to bind us by a contract and to make Himself a true debtor to His creatures, "A debtor, if GOD by promising is made a debtor." Therefore it is equally true that you will obtain eternal life if you ask it of GOD ; as that GOD is equally faithful in keeping His word. Seeing that this is not only a scholastic opinion, founded upon the doctrine of the holy Fathers, but a most certain dogma, and an article of our faith revealed by GOD Himself, and in terms so explicit, that it has never been, and never will be, overcome by anything. "Ask and ye shall have." (S. John xvi. 24.) "Every one that seeketh findeth," (S. Matth. vii. 8 ;) and elsewhere, "If thou askest anything in My name, I will do it," (S. John xiv. 14 ;) and elsewhere, "Whatsoever ye ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive," (S. Mark xi. 24,) where, remark with thankfulness, hearers, that "believing ;" and it is needful to say that you ought not alone to hope but also to believe, to believe with faith, firm, theological, indubitable, that your prayer will be heard. "Believing, ye shall receive." But how can I believe it, some one will say, if I have asked for a long time and have obtained nothing ? Who is this, who dares to tax GOD with being a liar ? Do you know for what cause, cries S. James, ye ask and receive not ? because ye ask amiss : either because you do not ask that which is expedient and so prayer is vitiated in its essence, not being in that case a petition of that

which is proper, or because you do not ask as it is expedient, and so your prayer is vitiated in its attributes. The high divine promises of the Redeemer are infallible, it is true, said S. Thomas Aquinas, but they are conditional; and if your prayers have no force it is because they are lacking the conditions necessary to obtain them. Well understand, O hearers, the essential doctrine of that saint, since the oracles of JESUS CHRIST supposed that upon which depends the all-powerful efficacy of prayer. Four conditions are laid down; he asks for himself; things necessary for salvation; piously; and perseveringly. Firstly, you ought to pray yourselves, and to pray for yourselves, for although the asking on behalf of others may be our truest act of love and GOD often hears such a petition, yet still as S. Augustine observes, such requests GOD does not permit to be fulfilled as He considers Himself bound to do for such petitions as you ask for yourselves. So that whatever is promised, is so, not for others but for themselves. You ought much more, therefore, to trust in the prayers that you make for yourselves, although you may be wicked sinners, than in those which you present on the behalf of others, even should they be canonised saints. Secondly, you ought to pray for eternal life, and then for those helps which are opportune to its following: you ought to pray for light to know and strength to follow the obligations of each one in his own state; you ought to ask for help to conquer temptations; to subject the appetite; to arise from sin; to unfold the occasions of persevering in grace, even to death. "Things necessary for salvation." The other things appertaining to this miserable life, must be ever sought for with that limitation, if GOD sees that they may be useful in the end

for the saving of the soul. As S. Augustine concludes: "For the need of one sick the physician knows better than one who is sick." In the third place you ought to ask piously, with humility, with fervour, with attention, and above all with great confidence, for the faith of the divine promises rekindling in you, in which such confidence has origin and foundation; you, strongly reminding the LORD of those dear promises, cry, "Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope." (Ps. cxix. 49.) Fourthly, you ask constantly, "perseveringly," that is to say every day, and many times a day, recommending your soul into the hand of God, that He may defend it, purify it, strengthen it, save it; and in the name of God Himself, concludes S. Thomas Aquinas, I promise you as much as you ask. "These things concurring He ever grants what you seek." And you will obtain it so securely that if it were necessary to stay the sun and to invert the elements, it would be done. For the heaven and earth may well be turned to nothing, but the everlasting word of JESUS CHRIST cannot be turned to vanity. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." (S. Matth. xxiv. 35.)

But it is here, O hearers, where instead of consoling myself with the plain promises of the Redeemer, I ought to bitterly weep over the infinite folly of His redeemed. If all would use the grace which is common to all—of prayer—with confidence, piously and devotedly, perseveringly asking for eternal life, and the helps, in order opportunely to follow it, it is an article of faith that not one would be lost.

Notwithstanding a large number of the baptised lose and damn themselves in spite of so easy a means of sal-

vation. Can one picture, O beloved, a blindness and carelessness equal to this? To believe by divine faith most firm that if we ask it, salvation will follow, and yet to desire to perish rather than to ask for it. Poor people buried and enveloped in the contorted and furied shadows of paganism, you know not the infallible promises of an infallible God. Yet you can bring no excuse for your brutal life; nor for your dying in sin. We that know them, O Christians, what excuse shall we have? What excuse will you have, O ye unchaste! for your so many lustful loves, if you do not ask for grace to quench them? What excuse will you have, O habitual sinners, for your so many very strong fetters, if you do not ask for grace to break them? What excuse will you have, O tempted ones, for your so many shameful discomfitures, if you do not ask for grace to conquer them? What excuse will you have, O worldlings, for your so many greeds of gold; for lust; for fashion; for sloth; if you never ask for light by which you can perceive the value of those eternal blessings, and of that green age of childhood? Most merciful God, I now, together with my beloved hearers, fervently ask of Thee to first infuse into me, and afterwards in all of these, the spirit of prayer. (Zech. xii. 10.) "I will pour upon the house of David the spirit of supplication." Since secure only when we know how to pray rightly: we shall then obtain eternal life. Amen.

XIII.

PARADISE.

"It is good for us to be here."—S. Matth. xvii. 4.

WHENEVER I think of the very bitter tears which Israel, a captive, shed upon the banks of the alien and inhospitable Euphrates, when having suspended their silenced harps upon the willows by the river side, and having tuned to weeping their mournful pipes, nourished only by grief and sighs, they turned towards their beautiful and loved Jerusalem ;—It seems to me, in truth, that such a mournful state ought to be the lot of Christians, who are far from the blessed Zion, who are placed in an abode of horrors and of servitude, at their sweet remembrance of that country, in which are powerless both mourning and death. Since we, miserable and desolate ones, cannot ever weep : are we not compelled to sit as captives by the side of the turbid river of Babylon, and to order our sad life amidst the degradation of so dreadful an exile ? Shall I not therefore have very much reason to fear that this universal complaint may be awakened in you all, when you will listen to my description which I shall give of those blessings, both true and infinite, which the saints are enjoying in heaven, whilst we wretched ones are rot-

ting in ruins in this desert earth? Yes, surely I should indeed greatly fear this would be the case, did I not see Christians resembling slaves who are grown callous under the yoke, or who are like the infirm, and who, having fallen into an enchanted madness, do not feel the weight of their servitude, and who toy amidst the raging of their fever. I ought, therefore, to consider myself most favoured, if—as far as it may be lawful for man to do—this morning describing that blessed mansion, in which the souls, who are contained there, perpetually triumph, I shall succeed in extinguishing in you the thirst for these fleeting and momentary riches, and in kindling a desire for that country, in which, if you are desirous of pleasure, God will satiate fully with Himself, that unlimited power of the soul which is only to be satisfied by Himself. According to the saying of S. Bernard in his second sermon on the Canticles: “God will be to the intellect as immense stores of light; He will be to the will an inexhaustible fountain of peace; He will be to the memory a continued assurance of eternity; He Who fills the desire of the mind with good things, He will be the fulness of light to the reason; He will be ‘a multitude of peace’ to the will; He will be the continuation of eternity to the memory.” ‘Under the faithful escort of that FATHER let us enter now, dearly beloved, and gaze upon that kingdom, whose blessedness is not meat and drink, but joy and peace of the HOLY GHOST. Let us begin.

In the first place, God will be indeed, *the fulness of light to the understanding*; “He will be the fulness of light to the reason.” For we shall see the most hidden secrets of His kingdom, no longer by faith, nor by intuitions, nor by speculative thought; but by means of

the divine light, which will suddenly invest our mind. In one moment of time we shall behold all objects the most charming. The first of these, will be the place itself, which was called by Isaiah "The city of our solemnities:" and we shall see also its festive and joyful inhabitants: "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation." (Isa. xxxiii. 20.) When the LORD had created Adam, He led him by Himself from the place of his formation, to dwell in that blessed habitation which was called the "Paradise of delight:" "The LORD GOD took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden." (Gen. ii. 15.) Conceive of the wonderment with which he was seized, when he first set foot in that blissful garden; when he contemplated for the first time those fertile mounds besprinkled and ornamented with every kind of flower; those grassy valleys, clothed with the freshest and finest grass; those shady groves, the inviting covert for the beasts as yet innocent; those shrubs, disposed and ordered by GOD, bending down under their weight of fruit; and, above all, that river, finer and purer than refined silver, which sweetly out-poured itself to water the flowers, the grass, and the plants of Paradise: "A river went out of Eden to water the garden." (Gen. ii. 10.) Wherever Adam turned his gaze in curiosity, it ever met with new objects of wonder to feed him with an unusual pleasure, to satisfy his soul with the profoundest joy. Now, O hearers, what is all this but a languid and feeble reflection of that sovereign delight, which your souls will experience at that time when you are introduced within the Empyreum. You will behold the celestial Zion so magnificent, which rightly was likened to a royal spouse, gorgeously arrayed on that fes-

tive day, and gay for her nuptials : whose foundations are fixed upon orient gems ; whose doors are inlaid with precious pearls ; whose walls are composed of wrought jaspers ; whose beautiful streets are paved and glittering with refined gold. There is no sun, for it will be overwhelmed by the light of GOD, which makes eternal day, and to darken which, night has no power : " The city had no need of the sun . . . for the glory of GOD did lighten it." (Rev. xxi. 23.) By that light, you will behold the glorified souls, distributed, each one in his own proper dwelling, and the temples crowned with their laurels. You will behold the holy angels, in rank, divided into their three hierarchies. You will see JESUS, no longer in the garb of a poor pilgrim, as He roamed through the streets of Palestine, drawing the multitudes to Himself by the ineffable sweetness of His speech, but taken up to the right hand of the Divine FATHER, reigning in His glory on His heavenly throne : and you will be received to a more intimate touch of those Wounds than was granted to S. Thomas ; wounds emitting streams of light, and from His side, as from a fountain of love, there will be given, that the faithful may drink, the draught of eternal inebriation : " A river went out of Eden to water the garden."

These are in very truth but the first rays of that abyss of light, in which the soul, like one shipwrecked and swallowed up, will immoveably fix herself in the contemplation of GOD Himself : " The God of Gods shall be seen in Zion." (Ps. lxxxiv. 7, Vulg.) Creation now speaks to us of GOD : the Schools now speak to us of GOD ; but they speak to us in terms, which though wonderful by contrast, are by their profundity but ill understood. They

say, that GOD ever lives: that there never was a time when He was not; that GOD dwells in all space, yet is limitless in presence; that GOD provides for all things, and yet is ever at rest and free from care. They say, that He repents, but neither on that account does He change His will; that He is angry, neither on that account is He subject to passion; that He grieves, yet does not partake of sadness. They say, that GOD is free, but that He is not therefore variable; that He is alone, but not for this reason solitary; that He is ancient, yet still ageless; that He is new, yet without a beginning. They say, that there is in Him a multiplicity of Persons, but not of essence; multiplicity of relationships, but none of their subordinates; oppositions, but without either discord or contrariety. They say, that GOD is infinitely prolific, though only able to produce one SON; infinitely eloquent, yet only able to pronounce one Word; infinitely loving, yet able to breathe out but one Love. They say, that the aspirations, origins, ideas, are uncircumscribed.

We charm the intellect in listening to such sublime mysteries, through reverence to the teaching faith; but at the same time we form some ideas of GOD which are very far from true: just as that blind man in the Gospel confounded trees with men, and the agitation of their branches with the walking of men: "I see men as trees walking." (S. Mark viii. 24.) However much we purge our minds, after all we understand less of GOD than we can see of the sun when the wintry mist hides its face from us: "Now we see through a glass darkly." (1 Cor. xiii. 13.) But when we shall have arrived—as one day we shall do—at the divine illumination, every veil will be rent in twain, every darkness and blindness will be dissipated. We

shall then see GOD in GOD Himself, and we shall see Him with the like clearness with which He comprehends and sees our entire beings. "Then I shall know;" I should not dare to assert this, if S. Paul had not been my master and guide: "Then shall I know as I am known." He will create in our intellects in heaven, the substitutes for that quality which is termed intellectual in the schools; GOD will intimately unite Himself to us, and in such a manner, that we shall see GOD in Himself, and through that knowledge which He will communicate to us, we shall know Him in glory: "Then shall I know as I am known: for He Himself will be to the reason, the fulness of light." Therefore, GOD containing in Himself in perfection, all things which were, will be, and are, possible, even to their creation from nothing, what thing soever can there be—what hidden mystery of nature, which you do not see in seeing GOD? "Of what are they ignorant," demands S. Gregory the Great, "who know all knowledge?" Then no one will be able to stringently and bitterly question you, as Job was questioned for reproof's sake: "Tell me, if thou knowest all things," (Job xxxviii. 18.) for you will know in a moment of time, the tongues of all people; the customs of every race; the speculations of all the learned; the sciences of all ages; the histories of all times; the fates of all kingdoms; and that most perfect harmony with which GOD rules and governs heaven and earth. The "treasures" of hail and snow will open at your glance, and you will see the motive power of the winds; how the rainbows are painted, whence the rains distributed; how the dews are distilled; how the comets are kindled; and at what forge, for the LORD of Battles, are the thunders, the lightnings, the

thunderbolts, and all the other fearful armature, made of His wink even. And seeing all this in the Word, and so to speak, in the essence of GOD Himself, you will know Him with that knowledge which will quiet your souls, nor permit any further desire to know more : S. Bernard says, "He will see in the Word that which is made by the Word, and he will see them there, where they are better than they are in themselves."

But beyond every other mystery which can be spoken of, O, my beloved ! how much will it delight you, to see all at once the beautiful stages of your predestination, and the marvellous ways in which GOD, amidst a thousand stumbling-blocks with a strong arm drew you on to glory ? Oh ! in the midst of how many rocks was I not sailing, in great danger of being swallowed up ? A sea, so faithless, and so ready to change the fortunes of those who navigate it, I was only able to plough by the special aid of the Divine government. If I had not broken that friendship when tied, if I had not subdued that passion in its bud ; if I had not left at the time of that engagement ; if I had not heard that sermon, which aroused me to repentance, I should have been lost. But the danger is now passed : "Then the proud waters had gone over our soul." (Ps. cxxiv. 5.) And as the Israelites formerly beheld, in security, on the shores of the Red Sea, the horses and chariots, the arms and armed ones, and the formidable fierce Pharaoh, threatening, now in vain, and drowning : in like manner, beloved, seeing the devil overcome, and his arts, violences, and frauds to fail, on the shores of Paradise, you will make joyful hymns to resound, and you will say to GOD, through a sense of grati-

tude, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death . . . I will walk before the LORD in the land [light, Vulg.] of the living." (Ps. cxvi. 8, 9.) This light, O hearers, is so life-giving, and so quickening, that transforming our souls into the likeness of GOD, it will exalt them to an existence most like to the being of GOD Himself: "With open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the LORD, are changed into the same image." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) For although the LORD diffuses Himself into our souls even now, and may make the glory of His attributes shine in them in a certain chosen form, He does not, however, communicate Himself so fully, as that each one should be a full partaker of His glory; or that each one should, at the time, become all goodness. He divides externally, to say with S. Paul, the intrinsic, indivisible infinity of His being, giving a part of Himself to one, and a part to another: "Now there are diversities of gifts . . . dividing to every man severally as He will." (1 Cor. xii. 4—11.) He is constancy in Abraham; He is providence in Joseph; He is gentleness in David; He is wisdom in Solomon; He is strength in Samson; He is formidable omnipotence in Moses: "dividing to every man severally as He will." "But in Paradise," resumes the mellifluous Doctor, "God will be all in all." All things will be communicated to each one, and each one will come to be everything in Him. Each one of us, in Paradise, will reign with the majesty of GOD; will judge with the justice of GOD; will know with the wisdom of GOD; will work with the power of GOD; and will live eternally by His life: "We shall be transformed, and GOD will be all in all." Each one of us, there, will become as GOD is; incapable of weak-

ness, incapable of error, incapable of change; perfect, holy, changeless, as GOD is: "We shall be transformed, GOD will be all in all."

Therefore that peace will enter into the will which truly should be called Divine: "*He will be hereafter to the will the multitude of peace;*" for there will be ended that sore struggle which ever compels our reason to watch as being armed; there will be cancelled that law, which is a debt both of sin and of repugnance; and under the shadow of those very palm trees, which we watered with so great a sweat of conflict when living on earth, we shall remain, gathered into the bosom of eternal peace: "And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation." (Isa. xxxii. 18.) All those objects, which are wont to bring tumult and war to the soul; all those senses, through which, on earth, tumult and war enter into the soul, will be converted in heaven into a fountain, flowing with that pleasure, which the Celestial Sion so joyfully feeds: "I will extend peace to her like a river of peace, and as a flowing stream." (Isa. lxvi. 12, Vulg.)

Turn, O beloved, your thoughts with me to Adam. He was sitting amidst the shade of his leafy abode, breathing the purest air of native innocence, when the LORD brought under his inspection, ranged in rank and file, every kind of beast; that he might give to each their name, in virtue of his prerogative: "The LORD GOD formed every beast of the field . . . and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them." (Gen. ii. 19.) Oh! what a spectacle of joy, and how gladsome ought it to have been to Adam, to see himself standing, not only amidst timid hares and helpless rabbits, but amidst the proud lions even, and the panthers, and the tigers, all gentle and

humbly waiting for the name by which they were to be called : waiting for his laws. But what a greater delight would it have been for Adam, to have beheld them so gentle before him, if he had before this several times had proof of their ferocity. Seeing that the devil rejoices over his native vassals, how much greater must be his joy over the rebellious, whom he has overcome. Such in heaven will be our delight and glory ;—we shall be seated there at a grand banquet, “in the beauty of peace :” and God will bring before us, for our inspection, in rank and file likewise, those flattering objects, against which we now fight with so much heartiness : that we may note anything of good that may be in them, of which we shall then be desirous, and that without fear we may flee from that which causes that appetite to rebel, which is now both pacified and in perfect subjection. Not only these, but the torturing objects will be brought to our remembrance which are now a grief and weariness to us, so that the soul may draw as much pleasure from them as it formerly drew bitterness. Oh ! cruel death, which once terrified me with thy fantasies ; I see thee now at last, trembling under my feet. Where, O pride, is thy stimulus ? where thy haughtiness ? Oh ! holy tribulations, which formerly afflicted me so greatly, where are now your tears ? Where, O penitences, which once so weakened me, where is all your bitterness ? Where, O fears for my salvation, which formerly distressed me so much, where is now your anguish ? Oh ! joy and peace reign alone here : “My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation.”

Peace, not only full, but overflowing, “He will be to the will, the multitude of peace.” Yes, the “multitude,” because full and animated by that love, with which God

loves His elect through a very tender sense of our well-pleasing, we shall come to make the peace, and the happiness, and the joy of all the comprehending spirits, as many as there be. "When we shall have attained to that blessedness," says S. Augustine, "our superiors will be there to see it: our inferiors will be there for the purpose of being put into subjection to it: our equals will be there to feast with us." How blessed the banquet with glorified souls! and to live there, not as a stranger, or a servant, but as a citizen, a domestic, a brother. When we first enter upon the thresholds of Paradise, and when we shall be just reigning there as kings, and transformed there into the most perfect likeness of GOD, we shall wish to do, as S. John the Evangelist did to the Angel—to throw ourselves instantly at their feet in adoration. But these holy ones will not desire this, nay, sweetly embracing you, "See thou do it not," each one will say, as the Angel did to the Evangelist—"See thou do it not, I am thy fellow-servant." (Rev. xxii. 9.) Dost thou not remember! Look upon me, I am that child, whom by thy charities thou didst save from sin: I am that offender, to whom, with a Christian heart, thou gavest pardon. I am thy companion, O most beloved spouse. I am, O dearest father, thy child, and when we lived in the world, I was a servant to thee. But all conditions of life will be made equal there: no longer will there be any distinction between the master and servant; between the protector and the protected; between the advocate and client. We are all friends: "Now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of GOD." We are all the most amiable friends, in whom we see,—nothing that

displeases us ; nothing that excites our desire ; nothing in the body, which is clothed with immortal glory ; nothing in the behaviour which tends to undue mirth ; nothing in the mind, which breathes perfect innocence : therefore, according to the saying of S. Gregory, " One beatitude of joy will be to all, although there will not be for all, one sublimity of glory." For although ours will not really be the exalted glory of the saints, nor of Mary, the august queen of the saints ; ours will become, in its satisfaction to ourselves, perfect peace and love : " There will be one beatitude of joy to all." Nay, our blessedness will hereafter be one with the blessedness of GOD. What now governs my senses ? what now strengthens my soul ? what gives me strength to speak worthily of that most fervent love, by which we shall enter into the joy of our GOD ? Love, necessary love : because the soul is naturally led to love the good, and to love it with less power of resisting its influence, in proportion as it is greater, and its recognition in the soul is more lively, and more clear. Seeing face to face that most pure infinite goodness,¹ from whom all creatures derive their good, it will not be able to help the loving it with an ardent love. O, lovers ! O, lovers ! whom an earthly beauty, fallen and frail,—which is, in very truth, but a subtle, imperfect ray of the highest beauty—ravishes so, that maddened by it, you regard not riches, honour, holiness, and life : a soul and Paradise, whom she, to use your language, despoils of liberty : you certainly ought to understand me. Oh ! understand me now to your own salvation. You do not know how to cease to love, although the love may cost

¹ Here, as by Plato, the good is tracked to the covert of the beautiful. Phil. lxx. A.—ED.

you jealousies and wearinesses, insults and desperations. Conceive, therefore, that these most blissful, comprehending ones will be free then to love this highest beauty, and that they will be in the presence of the high, and eternal, and altogether Lovely One, whilst in loving Him, they will find their repose and their peace: "He will be the multitude of peace to the will."

But at this point, O hearers, I candidly confess that my subject is beyond me. How can I reason of that ineffable peace, and delight, and joy, and fruition, which the blessed souls enjoy in loving GOD; if in me the flame of love is so languid and so spent? In this, although a portion of the subject of my sermon, I ought to give place to a Theresa who encircled with such a beautiful flame, unable to regulate the divine sweetness, ever and anon wandered in ecstasy, crying to the gentle breezes and to the stones, Love. I ought to yield it, to S. Philip Neri, whose heart the fulness of that joy truly dilated, and raised his very sides. But still being compelled to say somewhat of it, I will do so. If that illimitable and infinite Good who is seen sometimes by pious and devout men here on earth; in their holy and devout contemplations, seen I say, here on earth, sometimes, seen more clearly through habit, and more obscurely by faith, and enjoyed through a knowledge which is most penetrating, truly, but abstract knowledge: with such an impetus ravished them, and with such delight even to them, that they tasted it, as being inexplicable, and so entrancing their souls that some did not even notice the rising and the setting of the sun; some upon the desert rocks stood immovable, neither caring however for the snow from heaven, nor for the blast of the north wind; some upon

the pyre itself, or upon the wheel, feeling neither the crackling of the flames, nor the tearing up of the torments; others lifted high above the ground drawing the body itself suspended in the air, neither conscious nor unconscious of the body;—what will it be, O GOD most amiable, in paradise, when the darknesses removed and the veils taken away openly, we shall see Thy face? When not in drops, O no, but in torrents, that highest Good will inundate our souls? When faith having been changed into sight; hope, into realisation; and love into most perfect fruition, we shall enter into the divine joy as into a limitless, interminable abyss? And I say divine joy, because in the same way as by reciprocal love with which the FATHER loves the SON, and the SON loves the FATHER in return, proceeds “from within,” the HOLY GHOST, who was called by S. Cyril “the complement of the Trinity;” not otherwise, you see, by the reciprocal love with which the blessed soul loves GOD, and GOD in return loves it, proceeds “from without,” that consolatory joy, a most blessed completion of our heavenly and supreme happiness. Should we not wish to enter into further detail we can say that the completion of that happiness will consist in the most vivid recognition, with which GOD comforting the memory of the beatified soul, will remind it at each instant, that its pleasure and delight will be endless. *He Himself will be the continuation of eternity to the unerring.* Amongst the very many other hidden mysteries which GOD reveals to the blessed one, is the manifestation to him of that immutable decree, by which the firm assurance grows within him, that his fruition will know neither diminution, nor end, nor alteration: and each one seeing this, will continually repeat with S. Paul the

apostle, "So shall we ever be with the LORD." Without such an assurance of eternal joy, every inhabitant of the holy Jerusalem would become embittered by the thought which corrupted the heart of the king of Babylon in the height of his glory. "What will be after these things?" And this thought would be so much the more excruciating as the happiness which will be enjoyed in Paradise exceeds our imagination. But this inopportune cloud will never be able to arise, where GOD rejoices His saints, with the perpetual and consoling remembrance of that beautiful and never failing promise, "and your joy no man taketh from you." (S. John xvi. 22.) Therefore although the moments in which the soul will be blessed, may have a succession amongst them; some of them being past, others present, others future; still, the joy is not on that account successive, it will be simultaneous: yes! simultaneous and total and indissoluble and lasting. This joy is like unto the eternal life of GOD of which no time has passed nor will be able to pass away: although the days may glide by in which GOD lives on in undivided fruition. For which reason of the beatitude of the blessed we can say that very well which Boethius formerly wrote of the divine and inestimable eternity, "It is the entire and perfect possession of the same time of endless life."

I have borne in mind for this long time, O hearers, that I really feebly articulate my words, as a child does, when speaking this morning of that glory, "I thought as a child . . . I spoke as a child." (1 Cor. xiii. 11.) but if a christianly spent life will one day open to you the doors of the heavenly Zion, you will understand more, and enjoy more than I can now tell you. Surprised then with the highest wonder; what, will you say, could I

really desire a long life, without perceiving, that inas-much as that hard exile was prolonged, insomuch was hindered the enjoyment of such sweet repose? Ah my LORD, "one day in Thy courts, is better than a thousand," a thousand years, and a thousand years of life are well exchanged for one day of glory: and was I sad at the loss of a few days, through which loss I was to come to enjoy Thee for ever and ever? Ah! miserable men! And what deceit holds you to earth, so strongly bound to it? "Wherefore do we not hasten," cries S. Cyprian, "Wherefore do we not hasten and run that we may be able to see our country?" There, our dear ones, already fully blessed in their end, are expecting us, and they are only anxious for our arrival. They give us courage to despise the flattering enchantments of this world. They, from on high, show us their palms in order to animate us to a valiant warfare. They stretch out their arms in order sweetly to gather us into their bosom. To them, therefore, let us turn our desires, and from our errors, and from our follies, let us walk upon the right road, dearly beloved, which can alone lead us to our country, "let us hasten, yes, let us hasten that we may be able to see our country."

SECOND PART.

Even should all the arguments fail, which have hitherto been adduced to demonstrate the fulness of that glory, which GOD holds in store for His faithful servants; there is one still untouched which is so palpable, that all my hearers ought to yield themselves to its force: all, whether of rude or of cultivated understandings. As far

as I am concerned, its weight is so great, that all the Fathers and Theologians combined do not enlighten me in the same degree about paradise. Hear therefore . . . nay, with your eyes behold that Man-God and in this book written without by wounds, within by lamentations, read, O beloved ! read how it would describe paradise. This hard cross was the bank in which JESUS disbursed the sum for its purchase, and the price was His most precious blood. He deemed to be well spent all the wearinesses and agonies of His straitened life : all the humiliations and the pains of His cruel death. I argue therefore that the glory of Paradise ought to exceed by an infinite degree the created conception of it, since so wise a Merchant made so profuse an expenditure to acquire it. What notion the Israelites formed of that country to which they were going by pilgrimage from Egypt, I do not know, O hearers. I know very well, that on account of seeing the Egyptians thereupon drowned ; seas divided ; columns of fire ; manna raining down from Heaven ; and a city destroyed by the sole blast of the priestly trumpets, they must have said amongst themselves, with wonder-stricken visage, We are constrained to believe that place to be something eminent, promised to us for our resting place, prepared for our journey's end, since GOD conducts us to it with so great a profusion of miracles. And what will paradise be, O Christians ? the place to which GOD guides us, not thundering and glorious in power ; but an humiliated GOD ; a GOD crucified ; a GOD who died for this end. " Let us labour," therefore, " let us labour to enter into that rest." (Heb. iv. 11.) A like blessing is purchased for us, go up therefore to the possession, " Let us labour to enter." This ought to be the nature of our

desires upon the consideration of so great happiness. But I fear that it will not be with many of my hearers as it was with the Hebrews, as I have just narrated. The spies returning to the Israelitish camp; when they had surveyed Canaan with great care through the express command of GOD, prepared themselves to tell minutely of the abundance and beauty of that country. They said that they had there seen, large plains, choice pasturage, fertile valleys, and fruitful hills; they said that there the rocks flowed with milk and honey, they said, that the fountains flowed with pure milk, and knowing that the people refused to believe them they brought forth unexpectedly a bunch of grapes, which they brought with them to confirm their report. It was at this sight, that the people full of joy, raised the cry, clamouring that without delay the tents should be struck. "Let us go up at once and possess it." (Numb. xiii. 30.) Gently, then added the spies, gently, O brethren. Should you desire to carry out this design, it is needful to take up arms, for in proportion to the fertilities of the plains so are the fortifications upon the hills, and if these fruits are of a wonderful size, gigantic also are the inhabitants: men large in body and in valour; who are expert with the spear, and of a race, (who would believe it, living under so sweet a clime?) most barbarous and bloody. What matters it? A territory so highly favoured can well be purchased at any price; to the conquest, to the march, "Let us go up." "Let us go up." So the Israelites should have answered; but they did not answer thus. Learning that they would be compelled to make war, to undergo toil and fatigue, they altogether lost heart and began to murmur against Moses, and to proclaim loudly, that he was a deceiver:

that he desired to lead them out to die by the swords and teeth of those giants : and the tumult grew to that pass that they resolved to elect a new chief in order that they might return into Egypt. " Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." (Num. xiv. 4.) Souls ever sinful and worthy on that account that their bodies should strew the deserts a prey to the wolves. Let us now, beloved, turn to our application. The inestimable value of that country " which GOD hath prepared for them that love Him," has been already stated, and you can see a proof of it, in that divine cluster of ripe grapes, elect, hanging from that stem, as JESUS was called by S. Paul ; the grape of Cyprus suspended upon the pole of the cross, you should therefore, have it in your hearts again and again to cry, " Let us go up." " Let us possess it." Know, that for adults, this paradise is not the land of a favoured inheritance, but of toilsome and difficult attainment, " the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence." (S. Matth. xi. 12.) In order to obtain it, it is necessary to pardon wrongs, to return all that is unjustly acquired, to abandon the assignations, and to forsake the revels. It is needful to mortify the passions, to rein the senses, to subject the appetite : to tame the flesh ; it is needful above all things, to bring oneself back from the easy and pleasing way of the world to the steep and difficult way of the gospel. What do you say therefore ? Do you on that account draw back ? Are you afraid ? Do you lose courage ? Does it, perchance, seem to you as if GOD asks too much of you ? Too much it may be, so many nights for you to sit up to sustain your part in the conversation ; too much, so great a retinue to foment the insolence of that woman ; too much, so many tricks

to obtain that post, or that possession ; too much, so great waste for the purpose of supporting so inordinate a passion for display. But what can be too much in order to reign with GOD in eternity ? Ah ? for all things are as nothing when compared with so great a good. “The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory.” (Rom. viii. 18.) Nothing, say the anchorites, are our austerities. Nothing, resume the martyrs, are our crosses. Nothing, protest the Apostles, our age, consumed in missions, “the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory.” Oh ! if we could commence once more our earthly lives. Other forests, other caves, other hardships, other tortures we would endure willingly in order that we might remount up to heaven richer in merits and in crowns. And ourselves, Christians, to whom for this end alone GOD so mercifully grants so long a life ; that working and suffering altogether for His love, we may make for ourselves a higher seat of glory in Paradise ; shall we lose it ?—every day being so foolishly passed in pastimes, in revels, in sports, in recreations, we all the while deeming it to be a great work, the listening to one mass ; the saying the little office ; the keeping of a single fast ; the distributing a small sum in alms. O, Paradise ! so little esteemed by men, and on account of this small esteem often so miserably lost ! Amen.

